

THE CAMBRIDGE COMPANION TO
MEDIEVALISM

Medievalism – the creative interpretation or recreation of the European Middle Ages – has had a major presence in the cultural memory of the modern West, and has grown in scale to become a global phenomenon. Countless examples across aesthetic, material and political domains reveal that the medieval period has long provided a fund of images and ideas that have been vital to defining ‘the modern’. Bringing together local, national and global examples and tracing medievalism’s unpredictable course from early modern poetry to contemporary digital culture, this authoritative *Companion* offers a panoramic view of the historical, aesthetic, ideological and conceptual dimensions of this phenomenon. It showcases a range of critical positions and approaches to discussing medievalism, from more ‘traditional’ historicist and close-reading practices through to theoretically engaged methods. It also acquaints readers with key terms and provides them with a sophisticated conceptual vocabulary for discussing the medieval afterlife in the modern.

LOUISE D’ARCENS is Professor in the English Literatures Program at the University of Wollongong, Australia, where she teaches medieval and medievalist literature. Her publications include the books *Comic Medievalism: Laughing at the Middle Ages* (2014) and *Old Songs in the Timeless Land: Medievalism in Australian Literature 1840–1910* (2011), as well as the edited volumes *International Medievalism and Popular Culture* (2014, with Andrew Lynch), *The Unsociable Sociability of Women’s Lifewriting* (2010, with Anne Collett) and *Maistresse of My Wit: Medieval Women, Modern Scholars* (2004, with Juanita Ruys).

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EDITED BY
LOUISE D'ARCENS
University of Wollongong



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University Printing House, Cambridge CB2 8BS, United Kingdom

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www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781107086715

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First published 2016

Printed in the United Kingdom by Clays, St Ives plc

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloguing in Publication data

D'Arcens, Louise, editor.

The Cambridge companion to medievalism / edited by Louise D'Arcens.
New York : Cambridge University Press, 2016. | Series: Cambridge companions to culture | Includes bibliographical references.

LCCN 2015042019 | ISBN 9781107086715 (hardback)

LCSH: Medievalism. | Civilization, Medieval. | Medievalism in literature. | Medievalism in art. | Medievalism – Social aspects. | Medievalism – Political aspects. | Medievalism – Computer games. | Middle Ages in motion pictures.

LCC CB353 .C36 2016 | DDC 909.07–dc23

LC record available at <http://lcn.loc.gov/2015042019>

ISBN 978-1-107-08671-5 Hardback

ISBN 978-1-107-45165-0 Paperback

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Much of my research on medievalism over the past decade has been undertaken with the support of the Australian Research Council (ARC). I have been the grateful recipient of a collaborative ARC Discovery Grant for the project 'Medievalism in Australian Cultural Memory', DP0879058, and of an ARC Future Fellowship for the project 'Comic Medievalism and the Modern World', FT120100931. I would like to acknowledge this support, which has been invaluable for giving me the time and opportunity to edit this volume.

My thanks go also to the contributors to this volume, for their professionalism, enthusiasm and receptiveness to comments and suggestions on their essays.

As ever I wish to thank my family for their patience and support, and my many valued colleagues in medievalism in Australia and abroad for many generous and thought-provoking conversations on a number of subjects related to this volume.

I am grateful yet again to Chris Tiffin for expert indexing, and to the anonymous reader whose helpful comments and suggestions have improved the volume. Finally, my thanks go to the staff at Cambridge University Press, especially Chloe Dawson, Liz Friend-Smith, and Rosalyn Scott for their patient and encouraging approach to the publication process. Their guidance throughout the development of this volume is much appreciated.

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Introduction

Medievalism: scope and complexity

It is exciting when a field of study reaches the point where it merits its own *Cambridge Companion*. It is a sign the field has gained enough momentum and maturity to reflect on its own progress, and to offer summaries of its key topics, developmental paths, and critical approaches.¹ This is certainly the case with the study of medievalism, here defined as the reception, interpretation or recreation of the European Middle Ages in post-medieval cultures.

This cultural phenomenon has been the subject of a marked increase in academic attention over the last two decades. Some fine studies of nineteenth-century medievalism emerged out of Victorian studies from the 1970s,² but since the mid-1990s there has been a greatly accelerating number of single-author studies, edited volumes, journal issues, and individual essays in this area produced by scholars who, like many of the contributors to this volume, were originally trained as professional medievalists.³ Conferences and symposia focusing exclusively on medievalism proliferate, a number of publishers in medieval studies now have dedicated medievalism series, and there are at least two journals publishing exclusively in this area, with the longest-standing being *Studies in Medievalism*, which has been appearing regularly since 1979, now being joined by *postmedieval: a journal of medieval cultural studies*. A sense of the growing integration of medievalism into medieval studies, as a kind of reflexive offshoot of the discipline, can be gleaned from the now significant presence of dedicated medievalism panels in the programmes of the field's major international conferences.

This companion volume aims to address a wide audience that encompasses those new to the field as well as more seasoned scholars looking for a convenient 'roadmap' volume for their own research purposes and to recommend to their undergraduate and graduate students. Given that medievalism now features in hundreds of currently taught university and college-based courses, especially in English Literature departments across and beyond the English-speaking world, it seeks to provide orientation to some of the main forms in

which the Middle Ages have been adapted and interpreted, and to some milestones in the development of medievalism over the past centuries. With an eye towards geopolitical scope and temporal depth, it also aims to offer insight into the ways in which modern cultural phenomena, social performances, intellectual practices, political formations, and ideological discourses have been founded on ideas of the Middle Ages, and a snapshot of some key critical paradigms and concepts in a way that is accessible but which also does justice to the conceptual and historical complexity of this phenomenon.

Attempting to summarise medievalism is a challenging task for a number of reasons. The first of these is that 'medievalism' embraces a range of cultural practices, discourses, and material artefacts with a daunting breadth of scope, temporally, geographically, and culturally.⁴ As a phenomenon that has had a ubiquitous but often under-recognised presence in the cultural memory of the modern West (a term being used capaciously here to include both Europe and former British and European colonies), as well as in eastern Europe and, increasingly, in the global imaginary – it can be found in countless examples across aesthetic and material forms. Indeed, it is arguably its very ubiquity that has rendered it imperceptible to many.

One broad distinction that might provisionally be made is between the medievalism of the 'found' Middle Ages and the medievalism of the 'made' Middle Ages. The first kind has emerged through contact with, and interpretation of, the 'found' or material remains of the medieval past surviving into the post-medieval era, while the second encompasses texts, objects, performances, and practices that are not only post-medieval in their provenance but imaginative in their impulse and founded on ideas of 'the medieval' as a conceptual rather than a historical category. Some scholars, as Dan Kline's chapter indicates, prefer to highlight the mediated nature of the latter using the term 'neomedievalism', although there has been no critical consensus on this, as others argue that the '-ism' suffix is sufficient and marks the mediated nature of all medievalism.⁵ The medieval vestiges inspiring 'found' medievalism include buildings and architectural remains, artworks, manuscripts, charters, and other documents, as well as a profusion of artefacts ranging across weaponry, furnishings and textiles, musical instruments, ecclesiastical articles, scientific implements, personal adornments, coinage, domestic goods, and so on. This contact with the remnants and records of the Middle Ages led in the seventeenth and especially eighteenth centuries to the emergence of an antiquarian impulse geared towards recording, interpreting, and either preserving or memorialising medieval artefacts which were regarded as fragments of a past that was still present and yet in danger of being lost. This impulse developed into, and yet was also seemingly displaced by, a range of emerging professionalised and institutionally based disciplines

such as philology, diplomatics, archaeology, codicology, as well as numerous branches of historical studies (legal, ecclesiastical, architectural, theatrical, and so on) which sought in the nineteenth century to bring positivistic methods to their analyses of medieval artefacts with a view to building up an empirical understanding of the Middle Ages.

Looked at more closely, however, the distinction between ‘found’ and ‘made’ medievalism does not hold. As will be returned to later in this Introduction, from their outset these ‘disciplines of the archive’ were shaped by a shifting range of powerful yet unexamined progressivist assumptions about what characterises the ‘modern’ and the ‘premodern’ – in short, by the medievalisms of the ‘made’ Middle Ages.⁶ Distinguishing between the medievalisms of the ‘found’ and ‘made’ Middle Ages is also problematised by the fact that the creative responses to medieval remnants and artefacts have existed abidingly alongside scholarly responses. Just as the unearthing of Anglo-Saxon human remains in the nineteenth century inspired in tandem archaeological scholarship and verse ruminations, so too the nineteenth-century Ottoman recovery of Islamic texts from the Middle Ages was accompanied by a flurry of novels, plays, and paintings, and by the reconstruction of monuments from the period.⁷ More recently, the sensational recovery in 2012 of Richard III’s remains under a car park in Leicester has spawned not just a flurry of historical study but also public ceremonies, television programs, and innumerable Internet memes.

As seen in the chapters in this volume by Chris Jones, Bettina Bildhauer, John Ganim, Helen Dell and Dan Kline, unequivocally ‘made’ or creative medievalism has been both prolific and generative. It has had a major presence within poetry – British verse is featured here, but numerous other cultures also have their own impressive medievalist traditions – and has proliferated in such international non-literary forms as theatre, cinema, architecture, and music, as well as in globally popular participatory practices such as role-playing and video games, and re-enactment festivals. As becomes apparent through the images accompanying a number of the chapters, it has had a prominent place also in visual arts and crafts. It boasts, furthermore, an ongoing, albeit constantly shifting, presence that dates back several centuries. Mike Rodman Jones’s chapter reminds us that not only did medievalism exist in the Early Modern period, well before its nineteenth-century zenith, but in fact ‘the Middle Ages’ was itself an invention of the early modern.⁸ Indeed, as Stephanie Trigg mentions in her chapter in this volume, a species of medievalism can even be regarded as having begun in the late medieval period itself, in such texts as Sir Thomas Malory’s fifteenth-century *Morte Darthur*, which includes passages that bear the hallmarks of what would develop into Romantic medievalist nostalgia, as they hark back

to a prelapsarian Arthurian world of romantic fidelity, honourable governance, and mutual social obligation.

Despite the wistful idealism common to such romantic evocations of the Middle Ages, medievalism should not be assumed to be always favourably disposed towards the Middle Ages. Rather, this volume operates with a broader definition that accommodates negative views of the period as the barbaric, superstitious, static, and unenlightened 'other' of modernity. This hostility, as many contributions to this volume maintain, is simply too prevalent a construction of the Middle Ages to be ignored by anyone wanting to grasp the contradictory nature of the period's afterlife in post-medieval cultures. Medievalism's contradictory nature is equally visible in the conflicting ways the period has been pressed into the service of modern political and ideological interests. Some instances reflect a strong belief in the continuity between the medieval past and the present, which prompts calls either for the preservation of its venerable traditions, or for the demolition of unwanted medieval remnants in the present. Elsewhere the Middle Ages are looked upon, with regret or with relief, as a vanished past, which leads some to appeal for it to be left behind and others to urge for a revival of its cultural values or social structures. This elasticity makes medievalism equally amenable to the politics of both the traditional Left and Right, as well as to progressive and conservative ideological positions. Its valency shifts, sometimes subtly, sometimes radically, as it moves across political terrains. Clare Simmons, Richard Utz, and Andrew Lynch trace the ways in which the medieval past has been both lionised and denounced to buttress nationalist visions and military ideologies, while Nadia Altschul explores the way negative constructions of Spain as 'medieval' played a vital discursive role in Spanish America's progress towards political independence. Broadening the ambit further still, Bruce Holsinger demonstrates how political theory has turned to the Middle Ages to characterise post-national and post-industrial modernity as 'neomedieval', while Candace Barrington explores the discursive, creative, and linguistic means by which medieval culture has been reinterpreted globally as it is adapted in non-European contexts.

Defining medievalism is complicated further by both the scale and the classificatory slipperiness of the period from which it takes its inspiration. 'The Middle Ages' itself spanned, according to general consensus, roughly the millennium from the fifth to the fifteenth centuries, while its geographical ambit stretched, depending on the time, from the Celtic fringe across to what is now Russia, and from Scandinavia down to North Africa, and the Levant. Scholars, with their concern for the specific, have divided the era using a raft of contested micro- and macro-taxonomies. To cite only the most obvious temporal divisions, these have organised the period into larger consecutive or overlapping epochs such as the 'dark ages', the high middle ages, the late

Middle Ages, or into such smaller time frames as centuries, dynasties, reigns, and papacies. Geographical-cultural distinctions have ranged from identifying large entities ('the Western Church', 'the Byzantine Empire') to focusing on narrower, geographical-linguistic-political units (Occitania, Lombardy); others again have been based on a mix of geography, ethnicity, culture, and conquest patterns ('the Viking Age', 'Moorish Spain', 'Norman Ireland'). Some approaches, meanwhile, have carved the period up according to the emergence of its larger economic systems and political structures ('the feudal era', 'the Holy Roman Empire'), or according to significant events ('the Crusade era', 'post-plague Europe'). Others have used the period's major cultural, religious, and intellectual developments ('the age of chivalry', 'humanist Italy') and its narrative and aesthetic practices ('Arthurian tradition', Gothic art) as their principle of organisation.

Given these established practices of dividing the period up, it is no surprise that several types of medievalism can be distinguished along corresponding lines, such that one can identify, for instance, Arthurianism, Gothicism, Anglo-Saxonism, and even Vikingism among its distinct 'strands'. And yet numerous other medievalist texts and practices reveal something quite different: that despite the existence of multiple scholarly taxonomies – or indeed perhaps because the period has been so overscored with dividing lines – the Middle Ages have remained remarkably resistant to scrupulous historical representation in the modern imaginary. Instead, many instances of medievalism adopt and reproduce impressionistic tropes and generalised ideas of 'the medieval' drawn as much from literature or art (including both medieval *and* medievalist literature or art) as from history. The effect of this is that in some cases a single text representing the Middle Ages will include people and features which would not have coexisted historically, but which together create an aggregate of 'the medieval'. Bildhauer's chapter points to multiple instances of this in cinema, where a plausible medieval mise en scène is confected out of a combination of the factual and the imaginative: the 'found' and the 'made' Middle Ages again cohabit. In the case of humorous medievalist texts such as *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*, examined in Tison Pugh's chapter, this is used to unforgettable comic effect, due to a knowingly irreverent use of anachronism that compounds the sense, already found in medieval Arthurian literature, of a legendary rather than a historical medieval past. As Holsinger's chapter shows, though, even more avowedly serious adaptations, such as Hedley Bull's idea of the 'neomedieval' in his International Relations tome *The Anarchical Society*, work from an aggregated idea of the period's political and social structures.

In the past, and in some quarters still today, this syncretic and anachronistic quality has led to medievalism being dismissed as either frivolous and cavalier in its purveying of wilful inaccuracies, or as indiscriminating and gaffe-ridden.

Defenders have argued that despite their purported inaccuracies, medievalist texts can nevertheless capture the 'true essence' of the medieval world. Others have used the 'gateway drug' argument, claiming that some exaggeration or latitude with historical fact is permissible if it means that medievalist texts generate enough interest to draw people towards a serious study of the historical Middle Ages.⁹ Neither of these arguments, however, ultimately displaces the idea that medievalism has value only insofar as it ultimately concedes to, and / or reveals, the 'real' medieval past. An alternative and increasingly widespread position, which acknowledges medievalism as related to the Middle Ages but also distinct from it, argues that it discloses as much, or indeed in many cases more, about the time and place in which it has been produced as it does about medieval Europe. From Shakespeare's depiction of medieval dynastic history in his chronicle plays to Egyptian director Youssef Chahine's pro-Nasser representation of the Crusades in his *Saladin* (1963), one can identify dozens of medievalist texts that offer visions, or rather revisions, of the medieval past that serve the interests of modern political regimes. All of the chapters in this volume, moreover, reveal the manifold ways in which the Middle Ages are viewed through the lens of later concerns, from how to model global geopolitics through to how to challenge heteronormative culture. These reveal, crucially, that the medieval period, whether surviving in artefacts or existing in fantasy form, has long provided a reservoir of images and ideas which, in expressing modern ideas about the past, are in fact closely engaged in defining what it is to be modern. Helen Dell's chapter on medievalist music shows, moreover, that even reconstructions with earnest aspirations to authenticity are not immune from the influence of modern constructions of the Middle Ages.

This is certainly the case, as noted earlier, with the development of academic medievalism. Numerous accounts reflecting on the development of medieval studies have demonstrated that there has long been a complex history of interdependence between scholarly and non-scholarly forms of medievalism. On one hand, the increased professionalisation of the discipline in the later nineteenth century led to a preference for positivistic textual and historicist method over the more overtly 'invested' and passion-driven practices of amateurism; on the other hand, it has repeatedly been shown that personal and ideological impulses have persisted, though mostly unacknowledged, beneath the field's 'official' subscription to positivistic method.¹⁰ The fact that professional academic practitioners today refer to themselves as 'medievalists' attests to the debt owed by academic medieval studies to amateur and antiquarian recoveries of medieval texts and objects; yet it also demonstrates the extent to which the term has been unmoored from its original grounding in these amateur practices. This is evident both in

Richard Utz's chapter, which discusses the ways, both subtle and obvious, in which the nationalist impulses informing medievalism bled into academic medieval studies, and in Helen Dell's exploration of the inverse movement whereby scholarly formulations (in this case the 'cathedralism' of twentieth-century scholarship) shaped the direction of how medieval music has been performed and received over the past decades.

This complicated relationship to an empirically accessible Middle Ages is further exacerbated in non-scholarly medievalist representations by their promiscuity; that is, the way in which their allusions to the Middle Ages are frequently found 'in company', often quite haphazardly, with a miscellany of other aesthetic forms and allusions to other times and places. This is another reason why medievalism can be hard to identify. This syncretism is epitomised in the arts and crafts objects produced by members of the nineteenth-century Aesthetic movement, with their frequent fusing of the medieval with the Persian (see Figure 1), the classical and the oriental or generally 'exotic' (see Figure 2). It is also evident in the modernist architecture discussed in John



Figure 1 William de Morgan, dish, 1888–1898 © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

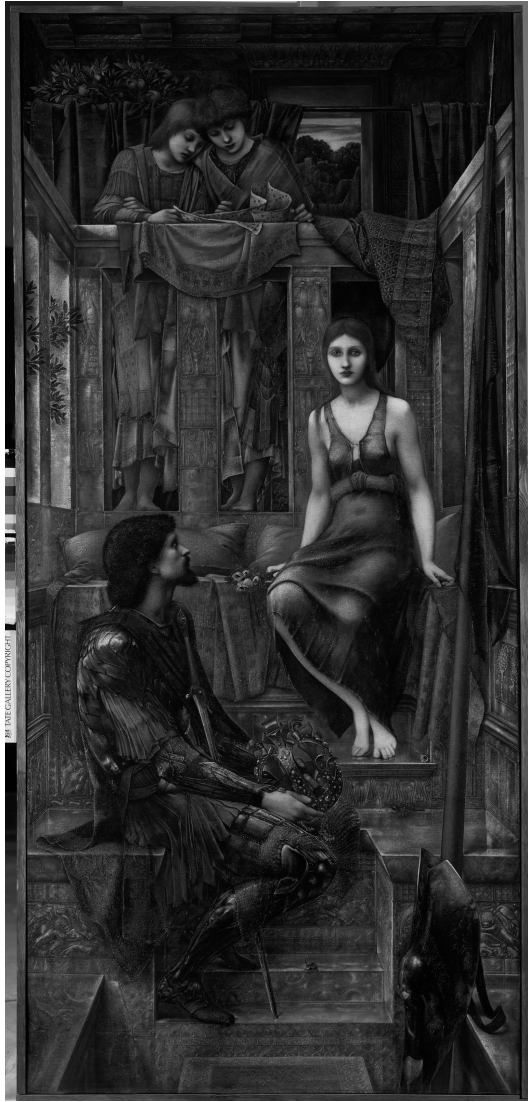


Figure 2 Edward Burne-Jones, *King Cophetua and the Beggar Maid*, 1884 © Tate, London.

Ganim's chapter, which combines the soaring lines of Gothic cathedrals with deco motifs or the pared back aesthetic of the International Style.

Perhaps most famously, the globally popular genre of medievalist fantasy fiction and its cinematic counterpart presents audiences with worlds that are recognisably medieval yet also more generally 'legendary' – mythic, located outside of history, and infused with the supernatural. It is these

worlds that form the inspiration for the interactive role-playing game worlds analysed in Dan Kline's chapter. In some cases it is difficult to extricate the 'medieval' from other forms and features because their medievalism is an epiphenomenon or symptom of other movements of which they are an expression. This is pointedly true of the Romantic medievalism discussed in Simmons's chapter, which cannot be discussed in isolation from European and British Romanticism's broader development of an aesthetic and historical preoccupation with the beauty and pathos of the ever-receding past.¹¹

Medievalism is inevitably bound up with perceptions of time and temporality, which, as Trigg's chapter explores in depth, determine not just how the present looks back at the past, but how the relationship between past and present is itself apprehended. Analysing the multi-temporal nature of medievalism – its merging of the past, or even multiple pasts, into the present – thus opens up a new avenue into the study of historical periodisation. Periodisation as a mode of historical organisation has been placed under increased critical pressure for some years now within medievalism studies. Particular scrutiny has been directed at the stakeholding involved in dividing the 'modern' from the 'premodern', which has led to the latter being artificially divested of any qualities deemed (often equally artificially) to be 'modern'.¹² This challenge has queried what is at stake for those who insist on linear and progressivist conceptions of time that assume the present has superseded and improved on the past, and has argued instead for the value of conceptualising our experience of time in terms of historical continuity and co-temporality. This, as Pugh elaborates in his chapter, has come to be referred to by some critics as the 'queer' asynchronous persistence of the premodern past within modernity.¹³

Medievalism studies' preoccupation with time is not incidental; for perhaps unsurprisingly, medievalism's own story has not unfolded according to a clear developmental logic, but instead traces a much more unpredictable and dispersed course, punctuated by recursive returns to earlier texts, styles, discourses, and ideas about the Middle Ages. There are nevertheless identifiable chapters within its history, such as those Romantic, modernist chapters mentioned earlier, as well as significant episodes such as, for instance, Richard Wagner's internationally renowned operatic revival of medieval Teutonic myth or, more recently, the publication of Umberto Eco's *Travels in Hyperreality* (translated into English in 1986), with its hugely influential essay on postmodern medievalism, 'Dreaming of the Middle Ages'. There are also undeniably influential figures whose visions of the medieval past shaped how the period is still perceived in the twenty-first century. Despite the different focuses of this volume's chapters, several of them single out the

work of Walter Scott, Alfred Lord Tennyson, James Macpherson, Edmund Spenser, Thomas Chatterton, and William Morris as vital to the major ideological, aesthetic, and intellectual directions in the reception of the period over the last two centuries and more.

Listing these influential names, it is impossible not to acknowledge the extent to which the tropes, values, aesthetics, institutions, and social structures that are associated with medievalism today, both within and far beyond the English-speaking world, owe an enormous amount to British literature, especially that of the nineteenth century. To take just one example, during the emergence of the nineteenth-century pan-Arabist movement, Walter Scott's *Ivanhoe* had a crucial impact on historical novels produced in Cairo and Beirut which, transforming Scott's legacy, took the Arab and Islamic Middle Ages as their subject. The British emphasis in a number of the chapters in this volume does not aim to equate medievalism with Britain; rather it reflects the magnitude of this legacy, just as the contributor profile reflects Anglophone medievalism studies' emergence predominantly out of English departments, although historians are increasingly offering valuable insights and illuminating case studies to the field. Nevertheless, many of the chapters here look to medievalism as an international and, increasingly, global discursive practice, extending the scope of their analyses to other European contexts as well as to North American, South American, African, Antipodean, and Arab contexts.¹⁴ It is international both in the sense that different national communities have developed local responses to the Middle Ages, as Mike Jones, Utz, Altschul, Barrington, and others show, and in the sense that even these apparently national responses have intersected with, and been influenced by, the medievalism of other national and cultural communities. The phrase 'global medievalism' is used here to discuss the global dissemination of ideas about the European Middle Ages, rather than to examine non-European cultures between the fifth to fifteenth centuries under the auspices of the medieval, for to treat non-European pasts as 'medieval' risks engaging in a retroactive colonisation of those pasts. There has, finally, been an attempt here at ameliorating the over-representation of men in the production of medievalism, by locating female practice within the larger context of medievalist production; but the fact remains that medievalism as far as we know at this juncture has historically been a largely masculine pursuit, even when avidly consumed by women. Exciting work is underway, with more yet to be done, to excavate the hidden histories of women's creation of medievalist worlds, and it is unquestionably an area worth pursuing.¹⁵

Taking into account the vast geographical, temporal, cultural, ideological and even modal breadth sketched earlier, it should be said that the riches of medievalism can certainly be outlined in a companion volume, but are surely

not exhausted. As such, this volume is panoramic rather than comprehensive in its reach, and its chapters are representative rather than definitive, illustrative of medievalism's manifestations within selected media, cultural, and linguistic traditions, and geographical–ideological contexts. There is no assumption, moreover, of critical unanimity between the contributors; rather, the aim here is to showcase a range of available critical positions as well as to model, especially to new readers, the diverse approaches that can be used to discuss medievalism, ranging from more 'traditional' historicist and close-reading practices through to more theoretically engaged approaches. Diversity is also evident in the way the authors frame their engagement with broad topics: while most address their topics head-on, others such as Barrington and Pugh use revealing case studies as departure points from which to open out their broader discussions.

One of medievalism studies' most significant contributions to humanities scholarship at large has been its nuanced engagements with a range of key conversations in critical theory. Some of this work has included important meta-analyses elucidating the under-acknowledged foundational role of medievalist thought in avant-garde, poststructuralist, and postcolonial theory; elsewhere scholars of medievalism have themselves made influential historically informed interventions into wider theoretical debates on sexuality, epistemologies of time, cognitive and affective history, posthumanism, ecocriticism, animality, and object theory.¹⁶ One of the key ways to ensure the evolution of medievalism studies is to acquaint new and aspiring researchers with some key theoretical approaches and to provide them with a sophisticated conceptual vocabulary for discussing medievalism. To that end, the volume's final chapters by Trigg and Pugh address the concepts of 'temporality' and 'queerness', two of the vital theoretical concepts that have emerged and continue to forge new and far-reaching paths within the field. The volume thus aims for ongoing currency not simply by showing where the discipline has been and currently sits but also by anticipating some of the fruitful directions it will continue to pursue in future.

NOTES

1. Further evidence of the field's maturation is the recent appearance of the critical guide co-authored by Tison Pugh and Angela Jane Weisl, *Medievalisms: Making the Past in the Present* (Routledge, 2013), the new reflective study by David Matthews, *Medievalism: A Critical History* (Boydell and Brewer, 2015), in addition to Elizabeth Emery and Richard Utz (eds.), *Medievalism: Key Critical Terms* (Cambridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2014). Another recent critical study by a scholar of early literature is Michael Alexander, *Medievalism: The Middle Ages in Modern England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007).

2. Some key earlier books are Alice Chandler, *A Dream of Order: The Medieval Ideal in Nineteenth-Century English Literature* (London: Taylor & Francis, 1971), and Florence Boos (ed.), *History and Community: Essays in Victorian Medievalism* (New York and London: Garland Publishing, 1992).
3. Apart from the individual essays by medieval scholars in *Studies in Medievalism*, early book-length studies by medievalists include Tom Shippey, *The Road to Middle Earth* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1982) and Allen J. Frantzen, *Desire for Origins: New Language, Old English, and Teaching the Tradition* (New Brunswick and London: Rutgers University Press, 1990). Earlier major edited collections include William Paden (ed.), *The Future of the Middle Ages* (Gainesville: The University Press of Florida, 1994), W. F. Gentrup (ed.), *Reinventing the Middle Ages and the Renaissance: Constructions of the Medieval and Early Modern Periods* (Brepols, 1998), and Richard Utz and Tom Shippey (eds.), *Medievalism in the Modern World: Essays in Honour of Leslie Workman* (Turnhout: Brepols, 1998).
4. The breadth and diversity of medievalism makes the construction of a comprehensive timeline an almost impossible task, not least because the linearity of the form cannot portray the intersecting, or indeed independent, lineages of practice developing in different places. Some partial timelines are available, for instance Appendix II in Matthews, *Medievalism*, pp. 188–192. See also the timeline in the open-access review journal *Medievally Speaking* <http://medievallyspeaking.blogspot.com.au/2009/09/timeline.html>, also mentioned in Nadia Altschul's chapter in this volume.
5. For a concentrated discussion of the nuances of the term 'neomedievalism', see the 'Defining Neomedievalisms' issue of *Studies in Medievalism* XIX (2010); for a discussion arguing for the sufficiency of the term 'medievalism', see Pugh and Weisl, *Medievalisms*, pp. 3–5.
6. See, for instance, Carol Symes, 'When We Talk about Modernity', *American Historical Review*, 116:3 (2011), 715–726.
7. See Howard Williams, 'Anglo-Saxonism and Victorian Archaeology: William Wylie's *Fairford Graves*', *Early Medieval Europe* 16 (2008), 49–88, and Ahmet Ersoy, 'Ottoman Gothic: Evocations of the Medieval Past in Late Ottoman Architecture', in Patrick J. Geary and Gábor Klaniczay (eds.), *Manufacturing the Middle Ages: Entangled History of Medievalism in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2013), pp. 217–238.
8. See also David Matthews and Gordon McMullan (eds.), *Reading the Modern in Early Modern England* (Cambridge University Press, 2007).
9. Natalie Zemon Davis, "'Any Resemblance to Persons Living or Dead": Film and the Challenge of Authenticity', *The Yale Review*, 76 (1986–1987), 476–482 (p. 477), John Aberth, *A Knight at the Movies: Medieval History on Film* (New York: Routledge, 2003), and Lynn T. Ramey and Tison Pugh, 'Introduction: Filming the "Other" Middle Ages', in Lynn T. Ramey and Tison Pugh (eds.), *Race, Class, and Gender in "Medieval" Cinema* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), pp. 1–12 (p. 2).
10. Influential studies of this include Norman F. Cantor, *Inventing the Middle Ages* (New York: William Morrow, 1991), R. Howard Bloch and Stephen J. Nichols (eds.), *Medievalism and the Modernist Temper* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), David Matthews, *The Making of Middle*

- English*, 1765–1910 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), Helen Damico (ed.), *Medieval Scholarship: Biographical Studies in the Formation of a Discipline*, 3 vols. (New York: Garland, 1995–1999), Jane Chance (ed.), *Women Medievalists and the Academy* (Madison and London: University of Wisconsin Press, 2005), as well as Kathleen Biddick's critical analysis, *The Shock of Medievalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998).
11. See also Elizabeth Fay, *Romantic Medievalism: History and the Romantic Literary Ideal* (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002).
 12. See Margreta De Grazia, 'The Modern Divide: From Either Side', *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*, 37 (2007), 453–467; Kathleen Davis, *Periodization and Sovereignty: How Ideas of Feudalism and Secularization Govern the Politics of Time* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008).
 13. See Carolyn Dinshaw, *Getting Medieval: Sexualities and Communities, Pre- and Postmodern* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1999); Carla Freccero, *Queer/Early/Modern* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006), and Carolyn Dinshaw, *How Soon is Now? Medieval Texts, Amateur Readers, and the Queerness of Time* (Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press, 2012).
 14. Of the numerous splendid accounts of medievalism in non-Anglophone European contexts that have become available, only a few can be mentioned here. For Italy, see Tommaso di Carpegna Falconieri, *Medioevo Militante: La politica di oggi alla prese con barbari e crociati* (Torino: Einaudi, 2011); for Eastern Europe see Geary and Klaniczay (eds.), *Manufacturing the Middle Ages* (2013); for Finland, see Derek Fewster, *Visions of Past Glory: Nationalism and the Construction of Early Finnish History*, *Studia Fennica Historica* 11 (Helsinki: SKS, 2006); for France see Zrinka Stahuljak, *Pornographic Archaeology: Medicine, Medievalism, and the Invention of the French Nation* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013) and Michelle Warren, *Creole Medievalism: Colonial France and Joseph Bédier's Middle Ages* (University of Minnesota Press, 2010).
 15. Apart from essays scattered through journal issues and collected volumes, a start has been made by Clare Broome Saunders in *Women Writers and Nineteenth-Century Medievalism* (New York: Palgrave, 2009).
 16. For key discussions of the medievalist underpinnings of key theoretical movements, see Bruce Holsinger, *The Premodern Condition: Medievalism and the Making of Theory* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2005), 'Medieval Studies, Postcolonial Studies, and the Genealogies of Critique', *Speculum* 77 (2002): 1195–1227, and (with Ethan Knapp), 'The Marxist Premodern', *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 34.3 (Fall 2005). See also Andrew Cole and D. Vance Smith (eds.), *The Legitimacy of the Middle Ages: On the Unwritten History of Theory* (Durham, NC, and London: Duke University Press, 2010). Other key forums for medievalist contributions to theory can be found in issues of the journals *postmedieval* and *Exemplaria: A Journey of Theory in Medieval & Renaissance Studies*.

I

CHRIS JONES

Medievalism in British poetry

In many ways poetry is the pre-eminent expression of medievalism in British culture when one takes a long historical view. I do not mean that poetry has more value or prestige than other forms of medievalism, but rather that, firstly, it presents a body of medievalism that stretches from the formation of the period categories 'medieval' and 'modern', to the present day. Secondly, poetry was itself one of the dominant modes of cultural expression during the Middle Ages. This may seem so self-evident as to be beyond remark, but it has a bearing on issues such as authenticity; however apparently realistic an image of the Middle Ages a film offers, it can never be taken as an 'authentically medieval' form of art the way a poem, in principle, might be. Yet because language, the medium of this aspect of medievalism, as well as many of the formal structures and mechanisms of poetry, nevertheless evolve over time, a natural gap of archaism and obsolescence opens up between the genuinely medieval and the self-consciously late response to the medieval. It is this gap that becomes the guarantor and the measure of medievalism in poetry.

Moreover, medievalism, unlike 'Victorianism' or 'Tudorism' (which have inspired films, novels and TV dramas, but not poetry), embodies a tripartite sense of history, which is fundamental to constructions of Englishness and Britishness. Indeed, medievalism is, by another name, the process by which all forms of cultural expression in the British Isles build for themselves myths of origin. Medievalist poetry in English is an argument for a 'native' literary tradition rather than a classicising, and 'foreign', tradition.¹ Chaucer's immediate models included Dante, Petrarch and Boccaccio, and among the poets he names number Homer, Virgil, Catullus, Ovid and Juvenal. Chaucer undoubtedly understood himself as a European poet and one whose work was contiguous with, if not equal to, that of the great poets of classical antiquity. But by the time Elizabethan critics like George Puttenham and Philip Sidney begin to articulate literary histories of English, a gap has already opened up between the present and the age of Chaucer, seen as

inaugurating a ‘first age’,² and providing a ‘fore-going’,³ of English literature. An origin is located by the Elizabethans in the British medieval past, rather than the classical antique past, yet the linguistic strangeness of medieval vernacular writers marks the Past as *passed* far more obviously than authors read in the seemingly timeless language of Latin. Ironically, a side effect of the gradual ascendancy of English is that writers of the ‘native’ tradition come to seem remote, and the easy sense of contact with predecessors that Chaucer and other medieval poets felt starts to vanish. Nevertheless, in stating that British culture from the Renaissance onwards began to site the origin of all its institutions and traditions somewhere in the Middle Ages, we are saying nothing short of the fact that British culture is ‘medieval’, and that, taken with its other forms and names, such as ‘Gothic’, medievalism can be seen as one of the enduring and defining characteristics of British literature.

So far I have been using the terms ‘British’ and ‘English’ in somewhat cavalier fashion, and it must now be plainly admitted that this chapter cannot offer a history of global medievalist poetries even in English, let alone in other languages.⁴ However, British medievalist poetry does form a unique nationalist case study, for it has been produced over a longer time frame than other forms of medievalism, and refers back to a longer period of literary history than do other vernacular medievalisms. This latter fact is because a substantial body of vernacular poetry in England survives, uniquely within Europe, from the tenth century and beyond.

Before beginning at medievalist poetry proper, it is worth preliminary consideration of medieval poems which themselves hark back to earlier periods of the Middle Ages. *Beowulf*, a poem probably written down in the late tenth century, describes events set in a semi-legendary past several centuries earlier. The poet mythologises an early medieval Scandinavian past in which poetry has a uniquely privileged position; on several occasions *Beowulf* stages the making and performing of what may have been regarded as ‘ancient’ poems and presents a vanished world in which poetry embodied important social and political functions. It has been argued that *Beowulf* presents this view of early Scandinavian heroic culture in order to construct a narrative of manifest destiny that legitimised royal ambition in late ninth-century Anglo-Saxon England.⁵ *Beowulf*, then, ‘medievalises’ the culture of a continental heroic age out of which it imagined itself as having evolved.

Likewise the late twelfth- / early thirteenth-century poet Layamon reworked (via Wace’s poem *Roman de Brut*) Geoffrey of Monmouth’s fanciful account of Arthur and the supposed matter of early medieval Britain in his 16,000-line alliterative English poem the *Brut*, a poem that likely participated in renewing a sense of English nationalism around the

accession of Henry III. During the fourteenth century, Anglo-Saxon England became a popular subject for verse romances, a trend which must surely be partly explained by a historiographical emphasis on 're-Englishing' and 'de-Normanising' the past in vernacular texts during that century.⁶

Medieval poets, then, were plainly interested in reworking material from the earlier Middle Ages. However, while medieval poetic responses to this past are politically motivated and historiographically complex, they are dissimilar from later medievalist poetries in significant ways. The post-medieval poetries to be reviewed shortly usually imitate or assimilate some aspect of the form, style, genre or language of medieval poetry. On the contrary, although the poems just discussed invoke the past, they do so in forms which were contemporary with their composition, not their setting: the heroic vocabulary of the embedded poems within *Beowulf* is the same as that of its own register; the plot devices and tropes of *Athelston* and other 'Anglo-Saxonist' romances are entirely drawn from within the conventions of the genre as defined during the fourteenth century. Indeed, when we consider authors of Middle English romances setting their works in, for example, Anglo-Saxon England (which is rarely realised as anything other than the generic 'a long time ago'), it is not clear whether this would have seemed much different from Chaucer or Robert Henryson writing about Troy's legendary past. These different pasts likely existed on a continuum of the historical imagination, rather than being divided into 'ancient' and 'medieval', or even separated from the present.⁷

It is a well-established historiographical fact that the Middle Ages were named into being at the very moment they were said to be passing away, during, and in order to define, the Renaissance.⁸ In some senses, therefore, it is surprising that we find poems invoking the medieval soon after this new historical awareness arrives in England. In another sense, however, it is completely unsurprising; as soon as a sense of distance and otherness concerning a previously contiguous near-past has been developed, the conditions exist for anachronism and revival. Calling the Middle Ages into existence almost inevitably invites medievalism as a response to this new kind of 'othered' past.⁹

Without par, the Renaissance poet who most fully exploited the new modes made possible by this different historiographical awareness was Edmund Spenser. His *Faerie Queene* is unimaginable without the influence of chivalric romance, stocked with innumerable characters, devices and tropes familiar from that medieval genre: the quest narrative, the knight errant, the lady in need of rescue, chance encounters on the road, single combat, sworn oaths, cases of mistaken identity, knightly initiation, castles, monsters, duplicitous mages; Arthur himself appears as a character.

Arguably it is in its romance-driven plotting that *The Faerie Queene* is most conspicuously medievalist.¹⁰ We are much more aware now than we used to be of the extent to which medieval romances were still widely read in Britain during the Early Modern period.¹¹ By means of that much-vaunted engine of Humanist learning, the printing press, it seems that the material most widely disseminated during the sixteenth century was the chivalric romance. Spenser, then, would have partly thought within the language of romance. Moreover, the Tudor dynasty had fostered a form of Arthurian revival to further its political ambitions, Arthur being associated especially with the Welsh, over whom the Tudors claimed overlordship as part of their project of 'Great' Britain. And in 1575 Elizabeth I attended an extravagant medieval-style pageant, organised by Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester (later Spenser's employer), at Kenilworth Castle. In the 1580s, when Spenser was composing his poem, the extent to which the institution of chivalry and the genre of romance were obsolete may not have been immediately obvious, and this period has been described as 'the Indian summer' of chivalry.¹²

Yet it is in Spenser's handling of romance that we detect the anachronisms that are the mark of a belated, rather than a participatory, response to the form.¹³ For his poem is not a chivalric romance, but a hybridised 'epic-romance', a collocation that epitomises the yoking together of medieval and Renaissance aesthetics of his masterpiece. Indeed, in the poem's prefatory letter to 'Sir Walter Raleigh knight', Spenser writes that although he 'followed all the antique Poets historicall', he has chosen not a classical subject, but rather 'the historye of king Arthure' in order to fulfil the work's stated aim of fashioning, 'a gentleman', a term then closely bound up with notions of chivalry, the code of behaviour intimately associated with the later Middle Ages.¹⁴ Spenser writes a humanist-medievalist romance on an epic scale in support of the cultural and imperialist ambitions of the Elizabethan court.

Moreover, the same anachronism is evident in Spenser's language, woven through with archaisms, mostly derived from Chaucer, whom Spenser admiringly called 'the well of English undefiled'.¹⁵ Spenser uses the obsolete form of the past participle, as in 'Ycladd' (*FQ*, I, i, 2) and 'ydrad' (line 18 of the same), a form standard in Middle English; he employs words with meanings current in Chaucer, though old-fashioned in his day, such as 'pricking' (line 1);¹⁶ and he spells words in unfamiliar pseudo-Chaucerian ways (such as 'dint' for 'dent' in line 3). Not all of Spenser's linguistic medievalisms are accurate; he appears to have misunderstood Chaucer's verbal phrase 'duryng don' ('daring to do', *Troilus and Criseyde*, V, 837) as a noun, coining 'derring do' from it to mean 'heroic deeds' (*FQ*, II, iv, 42). Nevertheless, the overall effect of this light veil of verbal Chaucerianisms, whether

orthographic, syntactic or lexical, and whether correct or not, is to create a texture of the medieval in the poem's materials, a linguistic impression of the Middle Ages that at once opens up a sense of a gap between past and present, and simultaneously purports to bridge that gap with an unfamiliar, yet nevertheless intelligible, language. This was to provide an important model for subsequent medievalising poets.

After Spenser a modest hinterland exists in seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century English of verse concerned with the Middle Ages; Dryden translated Chaucer's *Knight's Tale*, *Nun's Priest's Tale*, *The Wife of Bath's Tale* and *The Flower and the Leaf* (a Middle English poem mistakenly ascribed to Chaucer in this period) into heroic couplets in *Fables, Ancient and Modern* (1700), the preface to which calls Chaucer 'the Father of English Poetry'.¹⁷ In 1709 Pope 'paraphrased' *The Merchant's Tale* (calling it 'January and May') and part of *The Wife of Bath's Prologue*.¹⁸ Sometimes, and until firmer scholarship made 'the real Middle Ages' more easily available, Spenser's early form of medievalism stood in for the primary sources of other poets wishing to write in pseudo-medieval modes, such as James Thomson with his allegorical poem *The Castle of Indolence* (1748), written in Spenserian stanzas and set in a vague but recognisably medieval landscape. Nevertheless, this slender thread of medievalism can hardly be thought representative of the full tapestry of poetry in English during this period.

This situation begins to change rapidly from the middle of the eighteenth century. Inspired by the probably false story that Edward I massacred five hundred Welsh bards in 1277 during his conquest of Wales, Thomas Gray composed 'The Bard: A Pindaric Ode' (1757). Gray's poem, also discussed in this volume by Clare Simmons,¹⁹ imagines the very last poet of a long line of medieval Welsh bards delivering a prophetic curse on Edward I from the summit of Mount Snowdon before plunging to his death as a final act of desperate resistance. Although ostensibly executed in classical genre-form, as its subtitle indicates, 'The Bard' is written in irregular metre and with 'rough', unpolished diction intended to suggest the 'savage' and passionately spontaneous speech which would become associated with 'the Gothic', or pseudo-medieval style. A number of ironies attend 'The Bard', among them that a non-Anglophone tradition of medieval Britain is voiced in the language of the English conqueror, and that its moment of extinction is staged in verse at the same moment when that medieval tradition was being recovered into modern letters through the dedicated labours of antiquarians. However, in a chronologically complex double perspective, Gray's Bard looks forward, from his medieval past, to the future of Gray's own recent past, in order to prophesy a time when Edward's line will itself be overturned and replaced by the Tudors (who claimed Welsh ancestry). He then alludes to Spenser,

Shakespeare and Milton in order to suggest that the 'buskin'd measures' of English verse will re-establish a direct line of descent from the inspiration of 'the grave, great Taliessin', a Welsh poet of the early Middle Ages. In effect Gray's poem effects the very prophecy its speaker articulates, for Gray's fame and influence ensured that this new 'Gothic' literary history became a credible way of understanding the 'progress of poesy' (to quote the title of another of Gray's poems).

Many of these same ironies play out in poems that soon started a medievalist craze not only in Britain, but across Europe: the Ossianic 'Fragments of Ancient Poetry'. Ostensibly poems by a fourth-century, semi-legendary Gaelic poet named Ossian, kept alive in the Highlands of Scotland by oral tradition, they were collected, translated into English and subsequently published by a twenty-four-year-old highlander named James Macpherson in 1760.²⁰ Later that same year, encouraged by the success of the Fragments' reception, Macpherson went on a tour across the Highlands and Islands to collect more material, publishing in 1765 not one, but two entire Ossianic epics concerning Fingal (in six books) and Temora (in eight books). Samuel Johnson was suspicious of their provenance and challenged Macpherson to reveal the written manuscripts he claimed to possess; Macpherson never did and a controversy has raged ever since about the true authorship of the poems. Whether or not Macpherson forged them,²¹ a taste for the Gothic was cultivated by Ossian, marrying pseudo-primitivist notions about life in the early Middle Ages with a Romantic sense of the sublime. Like the bulk of Gray's 'Bard', the Ossianic fragments are often narrated by their putative author, the last in a line of ancient bards from a heroic race, and are set in a wild, mountainous, pre-modern landscape. Also reminiscent of Gray, the reader encounters a non-Anglophone medieval British verse tradition that was almost on the verge of extinction, and which, ironically, has to be voiced in English in order to revive its fortunes. A further irony is that these 'Fragments of Ancient Poetry' present themselves to the world in eighteenth-century prose (Macpherson did not 'translate' as verse) even as they foreground 'poetical' characteristics. Themes such as the transitory nature of human pleasures and achievements, reminiscent of the popular medieval *ubi sunt* topos, strike an authentic note, but the nostalgia with which this is tinted, as well as the preoccupation of the speaker (whether Ossian or other characters) with the egotistical self are liable to seem quintessentially Romantic, rather than medieval:

How has thou fallen like an oak, with all they branches round thee! Where is Fingal the King? where is Oscur my son? where are all my race? Alas! in the earth they lie. I feel their tombs with my hands. I hear the river murmuring

hoarsely over the stones. What dost thou, O river, to me? Thou bringest back the memory of the past.²²

Here, as in other ‘Gothic’ verse, the medieval is associated with an imagined closeness to nature and a spontaneity of feeling assumed to have been lost to post-Enlightenment rationalism. While the narrator expresses loss for heroic culture within these fragments, the very fact of their existence in print in 1760 itself represents an expression of loss for an imaginary and idealised past.

Inspired by the extraordinary success of the Ossian poems, Thomas Chatterton, a precocious but impoverished teenage poet-forger from the parish of St Mary Redcliffe in Bristol, soon developed the persona of another imagined medieval poet. Chatterton invented Thomas Rowley, a fifteenth-century canon of St Mary Redcliffe, as the author of a substantial body of forged medieval poetry, based partly on his limited knowledge of Chaucer and Spenser. Chatterton hoped to cash in on the fashion for medievalism with eccentrically spelled poems like ‘An excelente Balade of Charitie’:

Beneathe an holme, faste by a pathwaie side,
Which dide unto Seyncte Godwine’s covent lede,
A hapless pilgrim moneynge did abide,
Pore in his viewe, ungentle in his weede,
Longe bretful of the miseries of neede,
Where from the hail-stone coulede the almer flie?
He had no housen theree, ne anie covent nie.

In 1769, hoping for patronage, Chatterton sent examples of Rowleian literature to Horace Walpole, whose wildly successful medievalist Gothic novel *The Castle of Otranto* is discussed elsewhere in this volume by Clare Simmons.²³ Walpole, realising that Chatterton’s poems were fake, refused. A few months before his eighteenth birthday, Chatterton, as hapless as Rowley’s pilgrim, committed suicide in a rented attic room in London. Unrecognised in his own lifetime, Chatterton became a major influence on Wordsworth, Coleridge, Keats and Shelley, feeding a vigorous tributary of medievalism into the mainstream of British Romanticism.

Although deep knowledge of actual medieval poetry was still rare in the latter part of the eighteenth century, the work of Gray, Ossian / Macpherson and Chatterton / Rowley contributed to an appetite for medievalism among poetry readers, alongside collections of ballads and romances presumed to witness the late stages of an unbroken medieval tradition, such as Thomas Percy’s popular *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry* (1765).²⁴ This sudden flowering of medievalist poetry can be seen as a reaction against previously dominant Neoclassical aesthetics in English poetry, and an attempt to assert native origins for British literature over Greek and Latin models.

A few decades later, in the hands of Coleridge and then Keats, both of whom used historically non-specific medieval settings for poems such as 'Christabel', 'The Eve of St Agnes' and 'La Belle Dame Sans Merci', the Middle Ages became a semi-fantastical space where strange and subversive sexual energies could be set into imaginative play and explored without having to satisfy the demands of realism or contemporary mores. However, the most popular medievalist poet during the Romantic period was not a radical at all, but the conservative Walter Scott.²⁵ As a boy Scott had been entranced by Percy's *Reliques* and in his early twenties emulated Percy by collecting ballads which he published as *The Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border* (1802–1803). From collecting and editing such 'ancient' poetry, it was a short step to writing metrical romance of his own, and after hearing a recital of Coleridge's 'Christabel' in 1802 (the poem was not published until 1816), Scott adopted its rough 'new' metre to compose *The Lay of the Last Minstrel* (1805), which deals with chivalry, feuding and sorcery. Set in the mid-sixteenth century, *The Lay* once again invents a poet who is the last in his line as a framing device for the central narrative; the extinguishing of medieval poetry has often been one of the major tropes of medievalist poetry. *The Lay* was a huge commercial success and Scott followed it with *The Lady of the Lake* in 1810. Better informed about real medieval literature than his predecessors, Scott inaugurated the fashion for a medievalist poetry more serious than that of the 'Gothic' phase, and which was to remain popular throughout the nineteenth century.

Usually seen as the high-water mark of medievalism, the nineteenth century furnished the most enduringly familiar medievalist, and its story is well documented.²⁶ Tennyson was its leading light, finishing, when he was only twenty-three, 'The Lady of Shalott' (1832), in which the faery-like Lady, after catching sight of Sir Lancelot riding past her window, leaves the high tower where she has been imprisoned by a curse, endlessly weaving the 'magic web' of a tapestry. While travelling downriver to 'many tower'd Camelot', and before dying on that journey as a result of defying the mysterious curse, she writes her name on the prow of her boat and places a parchment on her breast stating 'The web was woven curiously, / The charm is broken utterly, / Draw near and fear not, – this is I, / The Lady of Shalott.'²⁷ Thus the Lady turns herself into a text that 'the wellfed wits at Camelot' puzzle over somewhat inconclusively. Ten years later Tennyson published a revised version in which the parchment disappears, with attention focussed instead on the mournful song of the Lady. Rather than puzzling over her, Lancelot, the unknowing cause of her death, pronounces 'She has a lovely face; / God in his mercy lend her grace, / The Lady of Shalott', thus (somewhat unsatisfactorily) interpreting the Lady and determining her

meaning. Tennyson's Lady is, then, an apt metaphor for the journey of the medieval text, from its remote, mythologised point of origin to its belated audience, who have to attempt some accommodation of its meaning within their rather different public discourse. Tennyson's earliest medievalist effort actually offers a paradigm for how post-medieval readers and writers struggle to figure the medieval within their world. The revisions of the poem specifically around the act of interpretation only reinforce the sense in which the meaning of the medieval itself always undergoes revision.

Tennyson had not read any British Arthurian literature when he composed 'Shalott', apparently adapting the story from an Italian novella, but he subsequently read Malory and reworked the material of Arthur into his long masterpiece *The Idylls of the King*, a cycle of twelve narrative poems in which the Lady of Shalott reappears as Elaine (1859–1885).²⁸ 'Shalott' also remained popular, inspiring William Morris in particular, who came to see it as one of the founding documents of the Pre-Raphaelite movement, a group of artists and writers who sought models for their practice from before the Renaissance. Morris's 'Defence of Guenevere' (1858) is in many ways written in response to Tennyson's depiction of Arthur's Queen as repentant and ultimately loyal, in the 'Guinevere' section of *Idylls*. Morris's is a fantastic and energetic tour de force, largely consisting of a dramatic monologue in which Guenevere excuses her sexual passion as natural and accuses her captors of hypocrisy while she waits for Launcelot to rescue her:

This little wind is rising, look you up,
 'And wonder how the light is falling so
 Within my moving tresses: will you dare,
 When you have looked a little on my brow,

 'To say this thing is vile? or will you care
 For any plausible lies of cunning woof
 When you can see my face with no lie there

 'For ever? am I not a gracious proof?²⁹

For Morris, who had painted his wife Jane as Guenevere, life would ironically re-enact art when he found himself having to play a tolerant Arthur in a love triangle involving Jane and his fellow medievalist poet Dante Gabriel Rossetti.

Undoubtedly medievalist poetry has largely been a male preserve, with women often figuring, like Jane Morris, as the idealised object of the male poet, as if the conventions of courtly love and troubadour poetry were still operative. However, there were nineteenth-century women poets who engaged with aspects of medievalism. Felicia Hemans and Letitia Elizabeth Landon both set poems in the Middle Ages in order to comment on the

Napoleonic Wars, critiquing chivalric ideals sometimes deployed in support of those wars.³⁰ Elizabeth Barrett Browning translated Chaucer's *Annelida and Arcite*, and wrote medieval-inspired ballads that deliberately complicate the representation of the chivalric knight in order to subvert contemporary gender roles, as is the case with Sir Guy, who is symbolically unmanned in the 'ancient rhyme' of her 'Rhyme of the Duchess May': 'Then the sword he leant upon, shivered, – snapped upon the stone.'³¹

Literary history, however, still tends to write medievalism as a roll call of canonical male authors, and according to this traditional narrative, medievalism slowly ebbs out of the mainstream of British poetry after Tennyson, Morris, Rossetti and other nineteenth-century medievalisers such as Swinburne, and even Matthew Arnold (*Tristram and Iseult*, 1852). Gerard Manley Hopkins is something of an outlier in this narrative, both because the belated publication of his poems (1918) seemed for a time to contextualise them as 'modernist' rather than Victorian, and because his style of medievalism is less pictorial than that of Tennyson and the Pre-Raphaelites. Nevertheless, his poems about the medieval philosophers Thomas Aquinas and Dun Scotus,³² as well as his coining of kenning-like alliterative compounds, on the model of Anglo-Saxon poetic diction, are coming to be understood as aspects of a broader Victorian medievalism, rather than as eccentricities:

A beetling baldbright cloud thorough England
Riding: there did storms not mingle? and
Hailropes hustle and grind their
Heavengravel? wolfsnow, worlds of it, wind there?³³

It is true that a number of Anglophone high modernists held medieval texts as touchstones for their own practice: Yeats's *Celtic Twilight* poems (1902) draw on medieval Irish traditions of faery; Eliot's *The Waste Land* (1922) draws on Grail legends for its title and central imagery, while Dante provides one of its major intertexts; Pound learned technique from translating twelfth-century Provençal Troubadour poetry and Anglo-Saxon to create medieval personae that also seem to comment obliquely on the dislocation of modernity:

If all the grief and woe and bitterness
All dolour, ill and every evil chance
That ever came upon this grieving world
Were set together they would seem but light
Against the death of the young English King.
Worth lieth riven and Youth dolorous,
The world o'ershadowed, soiled and overcast,
Void of all joy and full of ire and sadness.³⁴

In Britain this form of ‘modernist medievalism’ had an extended life for a few decades in the work of the early Auden, Charles Williams, David Jones and Basil Bunting, but in general it is viewed as a coda to nineteenth-century medievalism, and one which presents difficulties in accommodating to modernism’s self-presentation as ultra-experimental and innovative – medievalism having traditionally, if not always accurately, been seen as a conservative, backward-looking impulse. By the middle of the twentieth century, medievalism, although ferociously popular in the cinema, was considered a spent force in poetry, incompatible with the plain-talking, confessional style of poets like Sylvia Plath, Ted Hughes and Thom Gunn.³⁵

Yet in contemporary British and Irish poetry there has been a fascinating new turn to the medieval that could not reasonably have been anticipated in the last decades of the twentieth century, and must, in part, be attributed to the influence of Seamus Heaney’s translation of *Beowulf* (1999). Thus in 2006 Sean O’Brien published a version of Dante’s *Inferno*, followed in 2007 by Simon Armitage’s translation of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, in what one might slyly characterise as a kind of medieval poetry ‘arms race’, in which figures of the poetic establishment rushed to stake claims to the cultural prestige embodied in landmarks of medieval epic and narrative after Heaney had left the field with the spoils of *Beowulf*. By coincidence, Bernard O’Donoghue, whose commitment to medieval poetry has been life-long, also published a translation of *Sir Gawain* in 2006, meaning that cultural awareness of the *Gawain*-poet outside of university literature departments is probably at an all-time high since (and perhaps even including) the Middle Ages; in 2011 Jane Draycott published a beautiful verse translation of the *Gawain*-poet’s other masterpiece, *Pearl*, introduced by O’Donoghue, and consolidating renewed attention on this poet. Heaney continued to translate medieval poetry, bringing out versions of *The Testament of Cresseid and Seven Fables* by the fifteenth-century Scottish master-craftsman, Robert Henryson (2009). Heaney’s version of the Old English *Deor* also appeared in *The Word Exchange* (2011), an anthology of more than seventy contemporary poets translating over a hundred Old English poems. Finally Armitage extended his engagement with medieval poetry with his 2012 translation of the *Alliterative Morte Arthure: The Death of Arthur*.

Such a concentration of practising poets making so many translations of such a wide variety of medieval poems in such a short space of time simply has no precedent in the twentieth century when medieval poetry found publication primarily through the labours of scholars or professional translators. Such translators often produced extremely powerful poetic versions themselves, and we should resist the simplistic notion that a poet is always

going to produce a superior translation to that of a scholar; there is no implication of improvement or progress in noting that the twenty-first century sees far more poets translating medieval poetry than the twentieth, rather it is enough to observe that medieval poetry has become a significant source for a number of contemporary poets, and its translation has become a major creative activity rather than a minor one.

This wealth of medieval poetry re-entering the living stream of English poetry via poetic translation is noteworthy, but an even more interesting phenomenon witnesses a number of poets using medieval literature, or ideas about medieval culture, as a springboard for the composition of whole sequences or volumes of original poems. Christiana Whitehead's *The Garden of Slender Trust* (1999), drawing on her background as a medievalist, was an early indicator of this growing trend: John Haynes's award-winning poem in terza rima, *Letter to Patience* (2006), reworks passages from the Old English *Wanderer* in response to political unrest in contemporary Nigeria; Ian Duhig's *The Speed of Dark* (2007) is structured around a creative reworking of the twelfth-century satire *Le Roman de Fauvel*; Matthew Francis's *Mandeville* (2008) is a sequence of lyrics in the voice of the narrator of the fourteenth-century *Travels of Sir John Mandeville*; Jacob Polley's prize-winning volume *The Havocs* (2012) takes its title and controlling trope from the free translation of the Old English *Ruin* at the volume's centre; J. O. Morgan's *At Maldon* (2013) is a long sequence of new poems reimagining the events described in the Old English *Battle of Maldon*; Patience Agbabi's *Telling Tales* (2014) retells each of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* in a twenty-first-century voice; Lavinia Greenlaw's *A Double Sorrow* (2014) amplifies lines and images from Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde* into a series of seven-line vignettes in order to focus on the presumed psychological drama of Chaucer's narrative poem: 'Stories change shape in the telling / as words alter through long use.'³⁶

What is newly clear is that the traditional narrative of a 'high-water mark' of medievalist poetry during Victoria's reign, followed by a falling off in the early decades of the twentieth century, is no longer tenable. The New Medieval Poetry is widespread, vibrant and happening now; we are living through a new chapter in the history of medievalist poetry, and as the confessional tone of Francis's *Mandeville*'s envoi suggests, it is a chapter not yet finished:

I have seen many countries I have not described here
for there is too much of the world to tell all of it.
I have left some for you to discover on your own.³⁷

NOTES

1. See, for example, Howard D. Weinbrot, *Britannia's Issue: The Rise of British Literature from Dryden to Ossian* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).
2. George Puttenham, *The Arte of English Poesie* (Menston: Scolar Press, 1968; original publication 1569), p. 48.
3. Philip Sidney, *A Defence of Poetry*, ed. J. A. Van Dorsten (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1966), p. 19.
4. For Australian medievalist poetics see Louise D'Arcens, *Old Songs in the Timeless Land: Medievalism in Australian Literature 1840–1910* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2011) and Louise D'Arcens and Chris Jones, 'Excavating the Borders of Literary Anglo-Saxonism in Nineteenth-Century Britain and Australia', *Representations*, 121 (2013), 85–106. For American medievalist literature see Candace Barrington, *American Chaucers* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), and Paul Giles, *The Global Remapping of American Literature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), pp. 70–86.
5. See John D. Niles, *Old English Heroic Poems and the Social Life of Texts* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007).
6. Robert Allen Rouse, *The Idea of Anglo-Saxon England in Middle English Romance* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2005) and Dominique Battles, *Cultural Difference and Material Culture in Middle English Romance: Normans and Saxons* (New York: Routledge, 2013).
7. For an overview of a variety of different, and sometimes conflicting, modern ideas about the sense of time and the past experienced during the Middle Ages, see, in this volume, Stephanie Trigg, 'Medievalism and Theories of Temporality'.
8. See, for example, Theodore E. Mommsen, 'Petrarch's Conception of the Dark Ages', *Speculum*, 17 (1942), 226–242, and Fred Robinson, 'Medieval, The Middle Ages', *Speculum*, 59 (1984), 745–756. For relevant discussion in this volume, see Mike Rodman Jones, 'Early Modern Medievalism'; Andrew Lynch, 'Medievalism and the Ideology of War'; and Stephanie Trigg, 'Medievalism and Theories of Temporality'.
9. For general discussion of Elizabethan medievalism, see Deanne Williams, 'Medievalism in English Renaissance Literature', in Clarkwright Kent (ed.), *A Companion to Tudor Literature* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2010), pp. 213–227.
10. See Rosamund Tuve, *Allegorical Imagery: Some Medieval Books and their Posterity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966), pp. 335–392, and Andrew King, *The Faerie Queene and Middle English Romance: The Matter of Just Memory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).
11. See Alex Davis, *Chivalry and Romance in the English Renaissance* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2003).
12. Mark Girouard, *The Return to Camelot: Chivalry and the English Gentleman* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), p. 17.
13. On the 'pastness' of the medieval past in some of Shakespeare's work, see in this volume Mike Rodman Jones, 'Early Modern Medievalism'.
14. Edmund Spenser, *The Faerie Queene*, ed. A. C. Hamilton (London: Longman, 1977), p. 737.
15. See Book IV Canto ii of *The Faerie Queene*, stanza 32, line 8, p. 439.

16. Compare Spenser's 'Gentle Knight [...] pricking on the plaine' with the description of the knight Arcite in line 2678 of Chaucer's *Knight's Tale*: 'He priketh endelong the large place'.
17. James Kinsley (ed.), *The Poems and Fables of John Dryden* (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), p. 528.
18. Alexander Pope, *The Rape of the Lock and Other Poems*, ed. Geoffrey Tillotson, 2nd rev. edn. (London: Methuen, 1954), pp. 13–80.
19. Clare Simmons, 'Romantic Medievalism'.
20. See also in this volume Andrew Lynch, 'Medievalism and the Ideology of War', pp. 4–5.
21. Fiona Stafford argues for a 'middle ground' position in which Macpherson is assumed to have drawn on a genuine tradition of Gaelic oral materials of some antiquity, in order to fashion his own adaptations. Howard Gaskill (ed.), *The Poems of Ossian and Related Works*, introduction Fiona Stafford (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2002), pp. vii–xv.
22. From 'Fragment VIII', Gaskill (ed.), *Poems of Ossian*, p. 18.
23. Clare Simmons, 'Romantic Medievalism'.
24. See Simmons, 'Romantic Medievalism'.
25. For discussion of the politicisation of the genre of romance following the French Revolution see David Duff, *Romance and Revolution: Shelley and the Politics of Romance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994). For Scott's romances in particular, see Michael Alexander, *Medievalism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), p. 30.
26. Girouard, *The Return to Camelot*, Alice Chandler, *A Dream of Order: The Medieval Ideal in Nineteenth-Century English Literature* (London: Routledge, 1971), and Alexander, *Medievalism* all deal with Victorian poetry in some detail. See also Clare A. Simmons, *Reversing the Conquest: History and Myth in 19th-Century British Literature* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1990) and Anthony H. Harrison, 'Arthurian Poetry and Medievalism', in *A Companion to Victorian Poetry*, ed. Richard Cronin, Alison Chapman and Anthony Harrison (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002), pp. 246–261.
27. Christopher Ricks (ed.), *The Poems of Tennyson*, 2nd edn., 3 vols. (Harlow: Longman, 1987), pp. 387–395.
28. For discussion of *Idylls* and its politics, see Matthew Reynolds, *The Realms of Verse 1830–1870: English Poetry in a Time of Nation Building* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).
29. William Morris, *The Defence of Guenevere, and Other Poems*, ed., Margaret A. Lourie (New York: Garland, 1981), p. 52.
30. Clare Broome Saunders, *Women Writers and Nineteenth-Century Medievalism* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), pp. 36 & 46–51. On Landon, see also Simmons, in this volume.
31. Saunders, *Women Writers*, pp. 54–58.
32. Gerard Manley Hopkins, *The Major Works*, ed. Catherine Phillips (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002; original publication 1986), pp. 104–105 & 142.
33. 'The Loss of the Eurydice', lines 25–28, in Hopkins, *Major Works*, p. 135.
34. Ezra Pound, 'Planh for the Young English King', lines 1–8, from the Provençal of Betrains de Born, in *Collected Shorter Poems*, 2nd edn. (London: Faber, 1952), p. 36.

35. Although see Andrew Lynch, 'Medievalism and the Ideology of War', on Geoffrey Hill and Seamus Heaney as poets who unfashionably dealt with medieval violence in their work (and in Heaney's case was roundly criticised for doing so).
36. Lavinia Greenlaw, *A Double Sorrow* (London: Faber, 2014), p. 46, with reference to Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*, II, 22–23.
37. Matthew Francis, from 'Mandeville's Farewell', in *Mandeville* (London: Faber, 2008), p. 52.

2

JOHN M. GANIM

Medievalism and architecture

When William Blake wrote that ‘Grecian is Mathematic Form: Gothic is Living Form. Mathematic Form is eternal in the Reasoning Memory: Living Form is Eternal Existence’, he gnominically expressed one of the turning points in the history of style.¹ Although the medieval and the Gothic in the present day are associated with ludic and escapist distractions, often dismissed as fantasy, that fantasy has a history of ethical, political and spiritual advocacy, as it does in Blake, even if some of its advocates offer interpretations that are as conservative as Blake is radical. The idea of the Gothic Revival, indeed, of medievalism in general, almost always conjures up an image of the built environment. Despite the scholarly consensus, first established by Kenneth Clark, that the Gothic Revival begins as a primarily literary movement, a vision of the Houses of Parliament, or an American university campus, or innumerable churches in the reaches of the British Empire, almost always come to mind.² This chapter surveys the memory and reinvention of the Middle Ages in the built environment including town planning and urban design, and identifies a surprising undercurrent of medieval allusions and inspirations in modern and postmodern architecture. While usually thought of as a preoccupation of Western culture, allusions to a medieval past can also be found in architectural traditions from other cultures around the world. As Candace Barrington demonstrates in her chapter in this volume, a global medievalism reimagines a European cultural moment, which, in the case of the Gothic Revival, went hand in hand with Empire, reversing, subverting and appropriating it for new uses.

The Renaissance and the Enlightenment identified with Greek and Roman culture and, in order to do so, rejected the intervening millennium as an interruption. In some circles, this rejection was blamed on an irrational and superstitious Christianity (especially Roman Catholicism) stubbornly hostile to the beauty of pagan antiquity. The destruction of classical antiquity was sealed, it was thought, by the Barbarian invasions. One shorthand for this barbarism was the Goths, originally the nomenclature for one Germanic

people, but generalised to encompass the brutal enemies of classical civilisation. Gradually, this general term for the Northern Germanic peoples was applied to the architecture that emerged as they settled and Christianised, and medieval art and culture was condescendingly and problematically called 'Gothic'. Supposedly unharmonious, ill-proportioned and (paradoxically) beholden to foreign motifs such as the pointed arch, Gothic style, by this account, everywhere displaced the elegance and clarity that marked the built environment of the fallen Empire, at least until classical principles were revived in the Renaissance and Enlightenment. The earliest stirrings of the Gothic Revival and of the Romantic movement turned this opprobrium on its head.

The eighteenth century witnessed a new enthusiasm for the many medieval ruins in Britain, most of which were the result of the dissolution of the monasteries in the sixteenth century. At the same time, antiquaries and early archaeologists began investigating the material remains of the British past. Bishop Thomas Percy and Richard Hurd and others rediscovered the delights of medieval romance and often remarked on their architectural settings. The most widely publicised neomedieval building was Horace Walpole's mansion, Strawberry Hill, often cited as a turning point, which began construction in 1749. Walpole (1717–1797) was also the author of *The Castle of Otranto* (1764), widely cited as the first Gothic Novel.³ *The Castle of Otranto* itself begins with the architectural image of a giant helmet falling from a parapet and killing the presumed heir of a cursed estate. Strawberry Hill, however, embodied an imagined vision of the Gothic, rather than a conscious imitation of existing medieval structures. Strawberry Hill would soon be dismissed by medieval revivalists in the early nineteenth century as an inconsistent confection built with techniques alien to medieval crafts; but its design and collections mediated between the liberating pleasure of the medieval as articulated by the defenders of the previously scorned medieval romances, on the one hand, and the serious political claims to personal freedoms supposedly based on Gothic traditions, on the other. Horace Walpole was the son of Sir Robert Walpole, the influential British statesman who shaped the office that would become that of the prime minister. Although Sir Robert's mansion was a suitably Palladian building, the architect, William Kent, was one of the first architects to pay serious attention to medieval style as a possible alternative to Palladianism. Kent's associate and contemporary, James Gibbs, built a significant 'Temple to Liberty' (1741) in the Gothic style at Stowe House, Buckinghamshire. That is, even in their most playful moments, medieval architectural revivals made political gestures or claims, however inconsistent these claims might be.

If Strawberry Hill represented a promiscuous, hybrid version of the Gothic, filled with art and objects that defy categorisation other than

the reflection of Walpole's own taste, the work and writings of Augustus W. N. Pugin (1812–1852) ushered in a pure and uncompromising, though no less imagined, medievalism. His defence of thirteenth-century Gothic, because of its purity, integrity and structural logic, has earned him a place of grudging respect in modernist architectural theory, where, from the Bauhaus through the early development of postmodern historicism, Gothic Revival has a peculiarly protected place because of its apparent structural clarity. Pugin's definition of pure Gothic, or 'pointed architecture' is very specific, illustrated by reference to late-fourteenth- and fifteenth-century Gothic.⁴ The decorative complexity of this model style dovetailed with the love of rich detail in Victorian England. At the same time, Pugin's favourite medieval models recall the moment of the last complete hegemony of Catholicism, on the eve of the Reformation. The 'pointed Gothic' symbolically reunites a discontinuous authentic religious and architectural tradition. Pugin's advocacy of a purified Gothic is inseparable from his devotion to Roman Catholicism. As the nineteenth century developed, Pugin's identification of the Gothic as a quintessentially Catholic style would be challenged by the adaptation of the style for other purposes, including civic institutions, especially in the north of England, and evangelical Protestant churches around the Empire. Medieval revival architecture often symbolically dramatised religious and doctrinal debates.

Pugin's most famous project was and is the Houses of Parliament in Westminster. By the time Pugin was called in by Charles Barry and James Gillespie Graham to work on the Houses of Parliament, he had grown critical of late Gothic perpendicular, with its flamboyant tracery and horizontal dimension, inspired by such medieval examples as King's College Chapel, Cambridge (1446–1515), but proceeded to join them anyway. It is conceivable that his objection was aesthetic, but it was also likely to be doctrinal. Late Gothic perpendicular is stereotypically an 'English' permutation of Gothic, but it is also closely associated with Henry VIII's projects, and therefore with both apostasy and persecution of Catholics, though Pugin never makes this rationale explicit. In any case, Pugin had already decided that sixteenth-century Tudor was a 'debased' architecture.

For our purposes, however, Pugin's most interesting contribution is a book called *Contrasts*, which compares some real and some fictitious images of medieval buildings with their later, presumably degenerate, counterparts.⁵ What is interesting here is that Pugin considers not just an individual building but an entire town, and while he is more concerned with the townscape rather than the street, his comments imagine a sojourn through the various precincts of his imagined town. It is a city as a stage set, but that is partly Pugin's secret. He worked as a theatre designer before receiving major

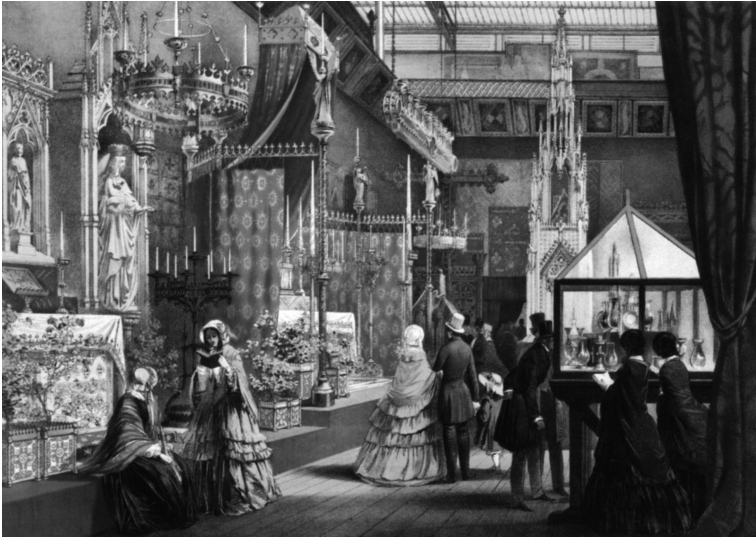


Figure 3 The Mediaeval Court. Haghe, Chromolithograph, from *Dickinson's Comprehensive Pictures of the Great Exhibition of 1851. From the Originals Painted for H.R.H. Prince Albert by Messrs. Nash, Haghe, and Roberts, R.A.* London: Dickinson, Brothers, 1854.

commissions, and even his churches work very much like theatrical settings for esoteric medieval masses. The result is a sense of procession and community that he sought to symbolise in his built churches and chapels. Pugin's swan song was the Medieval Court at the Great Exhibition of 1851, the Crystal Palace. We tend to think of World's Fairs as festivals of modernity, and certainly the Exhibition of 1851 celebrated progress, but at its heart, and one of its most popular installations, was the Mediaeval Court (Figure 3).

Widely circulated prints show well-dressed visitors admiring the furniture and manufactures, supposedly for domestic use, but inflected by strong religious imagery, produced by the Roman Catholic-owned firms with whom Pugin collaborated. Sectarian criticism was fierce, but the popularity of the Medieval Court encouraged the construction of medieval towns and streets in World's Fairs and colonial Exhibitions for the next half-century. In the Glasgow Exhibition of 1911, an 'Auld Toon' was entered through a newly constructed castle keep. The Paris Exhibition of 1900 had an elaborate 'Vieux Paris', recalling the older medieval fabric of that city destroyed by the renovations of Baron Haussman in the previous decades. That is, the experience of the medieval built environment was not only actual but virtual, as visitors flocked to these themed streetscapes and installations. Meanwhile, throughout France, medieval sites were being preserved through elaborate programmes that verged on reconstructions. In the 1830s, Pugin could decry

the decay of French Gothic monuments, many destroyed or defaced during the Revolution, and he could urge a renewed Catholicism as inseparable from their restoration. But by the 1850s, the great defenders of the French Gothic past, Eugène-Emmanuel Viollet-le-Duc and Jean-Baptiste Lassus, justified their rescue of Gothic sites by pointing to the mid-thirteenth century as the highest achievement both of cathedrals and of the free cities in which they were built. Instead of regarding the Middle Ages as an alternative to Victorian science, industrialisation and commerce, Viollet-le-Duc and his associates posited the Middle Ages and its rational engineering as the source of the liberal, scientific French spirit. Viollet-le-Duc turned the enlightenment criticism of the Gothic and medieval upside down. Helen Dell, in her chapter in this volume, notes that the reconstruction of medieval music is by definition an act of fantasy or imagination, since we cannot know how the music sounded or was performed. In contrast, medieval buildings, or parts of them, were still extant during the Gothic Revival, but that did prevent them from being objects of interpretation.

Meanwhile, in mid-Victorian England, the Gothic became a tool of social critique and ethical investigation in the work of John Ruskin (1819–1900), the most influential art critic of his time. His classic study *The Stones of Venice* was both an acute appreciation of the uniqueness of Venetian Gothic, responding to both its site and influences from the East, and a cautionary tale.⁶ As Venetian art and architecture devolved from their socially symbiotic origins and became an occasion for individual aggrandisement and desire, their economic and political importance also declined. His emphasis on integrity and authenticity also can be found in his observations about the rebuilding of medieval sites. Although he admires the energy and technique that Viollet-le-Duc and others invested in reconstruction of churches and towns, he warns against their attempt to complete the fragments and rebuild with an unsupported idea of accuracy to the medieval past. He prefers maintaining these sites in their partly ruined state, which at least communicated the experience of their builders and the people who used the buildings, rather than reconstructing them according to a modernised ideal of the Gothic. Ruskin's argument predicts archaeological debates that have continued since, and he imputes an aura to the partial and the fragmentary that is not at all picturesque. Ruskin is also prescient in his observations about urban planning, objecting to the imposition of grand boulevards and idle ostentation onto the authentic medieval (or at least historical) fabric of the city:

The real, earnest effort of the upper classes of European society is to make every place in the world as much like the Champs Elysées of Paris as possible. . . vast

hotels, like barracks, and rows of high, square-windowed dwellinghouses, thrust themselves forward to conceal the hated antiquities of the great cities of France and Italy. Gay promenades, with fountains and statues, prolong themselves along the quays once dedicated to the commerce. . . And when the formal street, in all its pride of perfumery and confectionery, has successfully consumed its way through the wrecks of historical monuments. . . the whitened city is praised for its splendour.⁷

Ruskin's criticisms here will echo through the rest of the nineteenth and early twentieth century, as the so-called beaux-arts neoclassicism of the City Beautiful movement spread from Paris to North America and elsewhere. The most dramatic example will be Napoleon III's remaking of Paris through the programme of Baron Haussman, which produced the current phrase 'Haussmanisation'. At the same time, as with Venice, an image of an almost sexualised corruption is suggested, with an honest and vulnerable Gothic transformed into a perfumed and confected present.

During the last third of the nineteenth century, William Morris inherited Ruskin's mantle as the arbiter of the medievalised built environment. In Morris, poetry, politics, architecture and design moved from theory and criticism to practice and production, if not always in perfect synthesis. Morris had been apprenticed as a painter under the charismatic Dante Gabriel Rossetti, and as an architect under G. E. Street, one of the most prolific builders of Victorian Gothic churches. In 1861, Morris regrouped his artistic brotherhood into his own firm, which would initiate the Arts and Crafts movement and transform design around the world. His own home, 'Red House', designed by Phillip Webb, is still regarded as the founding monument of that movement. In contrast to the machine-produced objects in Pugin's Medieval Court, Morris would advocate complete artisanal, handmade interiors, which were installed from Glasgow to Adelaide and throughout North America.

For a full-scale version of what a Morris townscape would look like, we have to turn not to his furnishings but to his utopian novel, *News From Nowhere*. Morris's narrator falls asleep to find himself in a socialist future. The socialist politics and agrarian economics of this future, and its relation to other utopian novels of its time, have been widely discussed. For our purposes, however, it is Morris's setting and background that is revealing:

They were all pretty in design, and as solid as might be, but countrified in appearance, like yeomen's dwellings; some of them of red brick like those by the river, but more of timber and plaster, which were by the necessity of their construction so like medieval houses of the same materials that I fairly felt as if I were alive in the fourteenth century; a sensation helped out by the costume

of the people that we met or passed, in whose dress there was nothing “modern” . . . I thought I knew the Broadway by the lie of the roads that still met there. On the north side of the road was a range of buildings and courts low, but very handsomely built and ornamented, and in that way forming a great contrast to the unpretentiousness of the houses round about; while above this lower building rose the steep lead-covered roof and the buttresses and higher part of the wall of a great hall, of a splendid and exuberant style of architecture, of which one can say little more than that it seemed to me to embrace the best qualities of the Gothic of northern Europe with those of the Saracenic and Byzantine, though there was no copying of any one of these styles. On the other, the south side, of the road was an octagonal building with a high roof, not unlike the Baptistry at Florence in outline, except that it was surrounded by a lean-to that clearly made an arcade or cloisters to it; it also was most delicately ornamented.⁸

Morris rebuilds London around a newly immaculate Thames, combining medieval design with perfect sanitation, resulting in an almost beatific happiness for its denizens. Morris absorbs both Ruskin and Pugin into his vision, but inhabits his brave new world with frankly beautiful and sensual creatures almost as a reproach to their asceticism. The communitarianism of Pugin’s towns portrayed in *Contrasts* is now achieved by radical communism rather than Catholicism. His utopia is not only economic, but environmentally sustainable. This vision of a healthy, sensual world nevertheless built on rational principles would be a dream pursued by the modernists who extended Morris’s futurist medievalism.

The birth announcement of architectural modernism was the Bauhaus manifesto. Yet on its cover, instead of an expected abstraction, was a woodcut by Lionel Feininger called ‘The Cathedral of the Future’, which takes apart the familiar planes of the Gothic cathedral and reassembles them in the fashion of cubism and expressionism (see Figure 4).

Interestingly, Feininger had produced an earlier series of prints in which medieval villages and streets were rendered in a similar modernism, stripping them of sentimental pictorialism and infusing the medieval past with the radical energy of the future, as he also does with the Bauhaus manifesto image. Just as Gothic cathedrals dotted the landscape of the past, the international style would become a new Gothic. Moreover, the Bauhaus would adapt the holistic educational programme of the Arts and Crafts movement, but celebrate the machines despised by Morris and Ruskin. Now, industrial production acquired an ethical dimension, as the only way to provide for the masses of the twentieth century.

The machine age looked back to the Gothic cathedral as one of its authorising prototypes. The most influential chroniclers of modernist architecture,



Figure 4 'The Cathedral of the Future'. Walter Gropius, *Manifest und Programm des staatlichen Bauhauses in Weimar*, April 1919. Four pages, printed on green paper, with an original woodblock illustration by Lyonel Feininger depicting the Bauhaus as a 'Cathedral of Socialism'.

such as Nikolaus Pevsner, reminded us of the structural clarity of the Gothic cathedral, or the innovations of Victorian engineering, often cloaked in Gothic decoration, as precursors of modernist design. Pevsner, the dean of British architectural history, explicitly compared the international modern movement and the international spread of Gothic cathedrals in the twelfth century.⁹ He also pointed to the Arts and Crafts movement, with its mediavalised aesthetic, as one of the roots of modernist practice. Indeed, it was common for the rhetoric of modernism to describe the achievements of nineteenth century large scale building as new cathedrals, whether those cathedrals were to be the great train stations such as St. Pancras in London or, as Le Corbusier himself claimed, the grain silos of Iowa and Illinois.¹⁰

As modern architecture developed increasingly in a minimalist direction, eschewing any ornament at all, the Gothic played less of a role as a model, though it might still be invoked as a metaphor. Nevertheless, there were still arenas where neo-Gothic and neomedieval styles held sway. While Neoclassical urban planning, under the influence of the City Beautiful movement, in imitation of the boulevards and street axes of Paris, dominated rapidly growing cities, especially in North America, where it was claimed to encourage civic virtue, certain institutions clung to the Gothic style. Thanks to the influence of Henry Adams and attempts to emulate older European universities, American colleges and universities continued to build in the Gothic style, even when their master plans were obviously Neoclassical. The world-famous competition for the Chicago Tribune Tower in 1922 was won by a skyscraper clad in Gothic ornament.¹¹ Yet modernists tended to direct their ire at Neoclassical buildings, which they felt, as did Pugin a century before, belied their materials and structure. Later in the 1920s, Gothic motifs were adapted to the Chrysler Building, the most beautiful skyscraper of the era. Automobile bonnet ornaments appeared as gargoyles and wheel covers became shield. At the Architects' Ball, where architects dressed up as their buildings, William Van Alen appeared as the Gothic spire of the Chrysler Building, while his wife was costumed as a fairy-tale medieval princess.

In the second half of the twentieth century, it seemed as if minimalist modernism had triumphed, obliterating the possibility of an architecture which reflected or even acknowledged the past. But by the 1960s, a reaction set in, the catalyst for which were the polemical writings of Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown, especially *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture*, ushering in what would become known as postmodernism, celebrating hybrid designs and historical references.¹² In *Learning from Las Vegas*, Venturi and Brown call upon a medieval example to describe the contradictions of architecture. They claimed that all building could be divided into two types. One type is the 'Duck', so called because he illustrated it with a shop in the shape of a duck that sold ducklings, which symbolised its function in its form. The other type is the 'Shed', so called because he illustrated it with the now ubiquitous big box store, set off from the highway and identified by a large-scale sign and lettering. The Gothic cathedral, however, is both 'duck' and 'shed'. 'Amiens Cathedral', they write, is 'a billboard with a building behind it', while 'the shed behind is also a duck because its shape is that of a cross'.¹³ Venturi and Brown thus sought to critique the aesthetic integrity of one of the inspirations of modernism. Their point was not to disparage the Gothic, but to force an acknowledgement that architecture is always both ambiguous and

obvious, a very different lesson than Pugin, Ruskin, or Morris would have us draw.

Modernist architecture could and did make certain medieval gestures, especially as it evolved in the 1960s and its attitude towards historical context and decoration began to change. College campuses were an early signal of such changes, perhaps because their existing fabric was already medieval or medieval revival. One can even argue that the concrete brutalist movement of the 1960s, which first became visible on British university campuses, was responding to the existing Gothic and Romanesque setting, although their Piranesi-like aesthetic, recalling the Italian artist's etchings of deserted ruins and prison-like interiors, was decried by traditionalist and the movement remains a subject of controversy today as many of its monuments are being demolished. Louis Kahn, who also built in concrete, achieved a synthesis of Gothic and Romanesque in the Erdman Hall dormitories at Bryn Mawr College (1960), outside of Philadelphia. His reputation until then had been based on the apparently modernist Richards Medical Laboratories at the University of Pennsylvania (1957), with their division of 'master' and 'servant' spaces, but Kahn himself compared the Richards' towers to those of San Gimignano. Medieval echoes, especially Romanesque allusions, would grow stronger as Kahn received more and more commissions in his later years, notably in the interior of the Phillips Exeter Library (1971) in New Hampshire. As David Brownlee noted in the omnibus Kahn retrospective, 'Kahn's first thinking about the Exeter library showed the influence of his contemporary monastery projects, wrapped in allusions to the Middle Ages and monasteries in particular. Corner towers and interior and exterior arcades imparted a castellar feeling. . . However, as work continued into 1967, the towers and arcades of Kahn's personal kind of medievalism disappeared.'¹⁴ However, in the Bryn Mawr Erdman Hall project we can see a medieval echo in the actual construction and spaces, with heavy load-bearing walls and the alternation of narrow and soaring enclosed spaces, very different from the space-frame modules of modernism.

Eero Saarinen, often ranked with Kahn as one of the most original mid-century architects, is usually associated with some of the most striking icons of late modernism, such as the St Louis Arch, the TWA terminal at JFK airport and Washington's Dulles International Airport. When he designed Morse College at Yale University, however, his design choice is a somewhat theatrically sequenced Gothic streetscape. Morse revives techniques of masonry construction, rare in high modern architecture. In the CBS Building in New York City of the same period, near both Rockefeller Center and iconic space frame skyscrapers by Mies van de Rohe and

Skidmore Owens Merrill, he returns to a bearing wall, its piers clad in dark granite, which, from the roof, appears as a brooding castellated fortress, in contrast to the steel and glass skyscrapers in its immediate neighbourhood. Saarinen may have been influenced by the late work of Le Corbusier, one of the founders of modernism, whose lovely Notre Dame du Haut chapel at Ronchamps, France (1954) offered a white, expressionist version of a Romanesque church, punctuated by small stained-glass windows.

One of the other champions of modernism, Phillip Johnson, who helped coin the term 'The International Style' that named the movement, went on to design what is generally regarded as one of the first postmodern skyscrapers, the AT&T Building also in midtown Manhattan.¹⁵ Unlike the flat tops of modern office buildings, AT&T rose to a top that resembled a piece of eighteenth-century Chippendale furniture. In defending his use of Neoclassical allusions, he referred to Saarinen's nearby CBS Building as 'Neo-Gothic'.¹⁶ Yet the open ground floor of the AT&T Building alluded to the Romanesque, with its limestone cladding and round windows. Both the AT&T Building and the CBS Building were a short distance from Trump Tower and the Citicorp Center, which, while not medieval in decoration, inspired Umberto Eco's famous prediction of a new Middle Ages, when he observed that 'such postmodern neomedieval Manhattan new castles as the Citicorp Center and Trump Tower [are] curious instances of a new feudalism, with their courts open to peasants and merchants and the well-protected high-level apartments reserved for lords'.¹⁷ In Pittsburgh, Phillip Johnson would make the most explicit postmodern allusion to the Gothic Revival, the PPG Building, which appears to take the Westminster Houses of Parliament and stand them on end to accommodate the comparative verticality of the American city. Johnson's allusion here alerts the viewer to the fact that postmodernism often borrows from other revivals as much as from the original historical source, in this case, Pugin's Gothic Revival. A counterpoint to Johnson's project is the ANZ 'Gothic' bank in Melbourne, Australia, where the preservation of a superb Gothic Revival space is linked to an adjoining skyscraper with loosely Gothic patterns.¹⁸ Both of these projects respond to one of the iconic skyscrapers of post-war Europe, the Torre Velasca (BBPR 1958), which still looms over the old centre of Milan. The Torre Velasca expands in its upper stories, recalling the urban castles of the Italian city-states.

A number of recent firms working in the modern idiom have reflected medieval urban and institutional contexts in the texture of their work. Williams and Tsien first gained notice with a sensitively sited dormitory at Princeton University, Feinberg Hall. They also added to a neo-Gothic building at the Emma Willard School in Troy, New York (among its graduates was

the suffragist Elizabeth Cady Stanton), producing the Hunter Science Center with its minimalist stone and slate facade and its narrow interior corridors and alternations of darkness and illumination.¹⁹ The existing fabric of the Emma Willard School was Gothic Revival, despite the classical echoes of the name of its city, Troy, and its location, Mt. Ida. Their most widely publicised project, because of its demolition to allow the expansion of the Museum of Modern Art in New York, was the American Folk Art museum. Williams and Tsien tilt the open plan into a vertical dimension, filling it with horizontal and vertical parapets, intersecting spaces and overhangs. With its dark bronze facade, it echoed the nearby CBS building, but also the splendid Gothic Revival St Patrick's Cathedral around the corner. In its synthesis of a brooding idiosyncrasy and machined detailing, the building addressed the intellectual linkage between modernism and the Arts and Crafts movement. Efforts to save the building, salvage its facade or demolish the entire building divided the world architectural community (see Figure 5).

In Europe, working from the late 1980s on, Bolles + Wilson produced interventions in the medieval historic centres of town, especially in Germany.²⁰ In Münster, they produced a noted library and community centre in the town square next to the cathedral. Rather than seeking to reproduce Gothic detailing, they slashed and rearranged modernist spaces vertically and horizontally to reflect the spatial setting of the medieval context. As with the work of Williams and Tsien, their response is not limited to the facades of their buildings, but attempts to think through the implications of Gothic space in their interiors, plan and siting. Their medievalised modernism can be seen in the plans of their projects as well as in the experience of the built structures themselves.

The postmodernism which has dominated design since the 1970s has resulted in a revival of Neoclassical urban planning also. Yet some of the projects described earlier have encouraged a looser, more informal sensitivity to context and pedestrian use. A good example was Philip Johnson, again, producing a plan for Roosevelt Island in New York City marked by an irregular medieval-inspired street down its centre, though the final project diluted the effect. While disguised by generic decoration, the many hillside condominium developments from California to Spain, with their light stucco walls and red tile roofs, are beholden to medieval mountain and hill villages throughout the Mediterranean, consciously or unconsciously influenced by the apparently timeless architecture celebrated in Bernard Rudofsky's *Architecture without Architects* (1965).²¹ Even the reaction against modernist and postmodern architecture has taken on a generalised medieval colouring. New towns, or more precisely, new quarter of old towns in Britain, sponsored by Prince Charles and his traditional



Figure 5 Williams and Tsien, Folk Art Museum, NYC. Photograph © Lauren Manning, Creative Commons.

architecture foundation, have melded the medieval to seventeenth-century imagery that was also employed by historical recreations in World's Fairs. The most well-known of these is Poundbury, an extension of Dorchester, which actually contains a building designed by the Prince himself. A proposed development for New Bath, modelled on the town plan of Siena, but filled with structures to have been designed by decidedly non-traditional architects, including Frank Gehry, foundered, despite purported discussions with Prince Charles and his foundation, but had it been built, the

medieval would once again have become a medium for engaging the interests of a wide public and political spectrum, as it did in the nineteenth-century Gothic Revival.

This is not to say that the Gothic Revival has disappeared from the public sphere. If our built environment now offers the medieval as an echo or a fleeting allusion, in our virtual environment the Gothic is thriving, informing the architecture of electronic gaming, from the seemingly infinite series of dream-like medievalised spaces in some, to the often brutal military details of others, invoking and inverting the Gothic pacificism of Blake's incantation with which this chapter began. Another, less noticed aspect of architectural medievalism can be found outside of, or on the edges of, European influence. In the Islamic world, buildings often recall the Golden Age of Islam that corresponds to the Western Middle Ages. At other times, buildings allude to the desert origins of Islam itself. In some cases, these architectural examples are designed by Western or international firms, but in other cases by regional or national architects. Pilgrims approaching Mecca by air often land at the Hajj Terminal (SOM, Hajj Terminal, Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, 1983), designed by Skidmore Owens Merrill, a modernist building that alludes to tents and to the rhythms of traditional Islamic architectural methods. It was built partly by traditional methods and labour. Nearby, the Intercontinental Hotel and Conference Center in Mecca designed by Frei Otto (Frei Otto, Intercontinental Hotel and Conference Center, Mecca 1974) features the firm's skill at tensile roofing, but it also invokes the tent, and includes lattice work so typical of medieval interiors in the Islamic world.

Other projects connect the modern to the medieval in lands contested by conflict between Islam and Christianity in the past. Two examples are archaeological sites. One, in Spain, surrounds the archaeological site of the palace city of Madinat al-Zahra (Nieto Sobejano, Madinat Al Zahra Museum, Córdoba, 2010). What one sees here is an enlarged view of the potential of Islamic civic culture, on the one hand (the project won the Aga Khan Prize for Architecture), and an attempt by Spain and by Western Europe, on the other, to redefine themselves as open to their hybrid pasts, singling out a past that seemed to be able to negotiate different ethnicities and religious identities. The style of the visitor's pavilion, with a long, sequenced entrance, white walls and fountains, explicitly recalls the great palaces of Muslim Spain. In contrast, the other example, FILTER Architecture's design (2011) for the Historical Park of Medieval Bosnia, responded to the call for an exhibition space at a critical juncture in the extensive Kamberović Park in the town of Zenica on the River Bosna. Alternately transparent and opaque structures track the patterns of building beneath the surface of the park. Here

the architects purposely avoid any romantic allusion to national origin or history, as if to exorcise the danger of such claims.

Interestingly, some examples of medieval Islamic architecture are recalled in commercial projects. Perhaps the best known is the extravagant Ibn Battuta Mall (2005) in Dubai. Each of its various shopping precincts is themed according to Ibn Battuta's account of his travels in the fourteenth century, including Tunisia, Al-Andalus, Persia, China, India and so forth. In contemporary Iran, the Isfahan Dreamland Commercial Center by Farshad Mehdizadeh Architects has won awards for its proposed design, seeking to integrate the traditional architecture of the city with recent commercial expansion. Arches and shaded corridors in striated concrete recall the work of Louis Kahn, whose several projects in India and Bangladesh attempted to fuse traditional and modern forms and materials. In many of these examples where the medieval period is not or not only the Christian West, the Middle Ages is called upon to create a public or at least accessible location, where conflicts between modernity and tradition can be worked out, or at least addressed.

Thus, medievalism in architecture follows a dialectic of public agenda and private fantasy, of Gothic hallucination and civic idealism, of elite exclusion and populist inclusion. Presently, in the West, and perhaps globally, this dialectic is expressed virtually, in the rise of digital gaming and interactive new media, where medievalism has become the ghost in the machine, providing a model for the uncanny levels of projected spaces that map and unmap the experience of these games. Daniel T. Kline offers an extensive description of this virtual world in his chapter in this volume. Architecture itself has turned to computer imaging as a replacement for the drawing, so perhaps the distinction between the built and virtual environment can no longer be maintained. If so, medievalism, which never abided that distinction in any case, will remain invisibly present.

NOTES

1. William Blake, 'On Homer's Poetry and On Virgil', in David V. Erdman (ed.), *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, Newly Revised Edition (New York: Anchor Books), p. 270.
2. Kenneth Clark 1974. *The Gothic Revival*, 3rd edn. (London: J. Murray, 1974). A lucid recent overview is Michael J. Lewis, *The Gothic Revival* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2003). On the literary within the Gothic Revival, see Michael J. Alexander, *Medievalism: The Middle Ages in Modern Britain* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007).
3. Horace Walpole, *The Castle of Otranto, A Gothic Story*, 2nd edn. ([London, 1765]).

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3

BETTINA BILDHAUER

Medievalism and cinema

From the chess game with Death bathed in stark white light in *The Seventh Seal* (1957) to the king cantering along without a horse to the sound of coconuts in *Monty Python and the Holy Grail* (1975), the murky claustrophobia of an abbey under inquisition in *The Name of the Rose* (1986) to the rocking tournament audience in *A Knight's Tale* (2004), the dusty monumentality of Jerusalem under siege in *Kingdom of Heaven* (2005) to the smooth, liquid gold skin of Angelina Jolie as Grendel's mother in *Beowulf* (2007) – a startling array of memorable images and sounds represents the Middle Ages in the cinema (for one of the most iconic, see Figure 6).

With dozens of medieval films released every year, and their academic research entering the mainstream, this is an exciting and challenging time to study the genre. Film-makers mine medieval history, myth and literature for compelling stories and striking images of heroes and kings, knights and ladies, war and community, faith and mystery, and are inspired by the growing body of existing films on Joan of Arc, Robin Hood, King Arthur and his knights, the crusades, the Black Death, Viking raids and the Inquisition. Researchers have begun to see the significance of this corpus, and published so much on medieval film since the turn of the millennium, mostly in parallel rather than building on each other, that the most fundamental questions about the genre are currently under spirited discussion: what is a medieval film? How do we best label the genre? Is it a genre at all? How do we judge a medieval film? Should we be judging it at all? What characterises medieval films and distinguishes them from others? As the debate has moved on so quickly and with so little interaction and consensus, it is time to take stock rather than to add yet another case study. The following chapter aims to introduce medieval film from the perspective of the most recent academic thinking about these elemental questions, and is structured around the salient terms and issues to offer a brief orientation in this field.



Figure 6 *The Seventh Seal*, 1957: The chess-playing crusader.

What is a medieval film?

‘It’s one big medieval muddle’, says Merlin of the stacks of dirty pots and plates piling up in the castle kitchen in Disney’s Arthurian animation *The Sword and the Stone* (1963), and so is the current definition of the group of films that this chapter is concerned with. ‘Medieval film’, ‘medieval cinema’ and (in American English) ‘medieval movies’, all with or without inverted commas around ‘medieval’, are currently the dominant labels. Also in use are terms like ‘movie medievalism’, ‘cinemedievalism’, ‘cinematic medievalism’, ‘films on the Middle Ages’ or ‘the Middle Ages on film’. This chapter stays with the concise ‘medieval film’, because it introduces an element of momentary confusion of the time periods (films made in the Middle Ages? Surely not!) that is, as will be shown, quite typical of the genre.

What is a medieval film? Most people mean in the first instance a film that is set in the Middle Ages, that is, usually between the years AD 500 and 1500, be it the ‘Dark Ages’ (or early Middle Ages, c. AD 500–1000) of Viking raids and migration in *Beowulf*; the High Middle Ages (c. AD 1000–1300) of chivalry and crusading in *The Seventh Seal* and *A Knight’s Tale*; or the Late Middle Ages (c. AD 1300–1500) of the Inquisition and dawning modernity in *The Name of the Rose*. However, these dates and periodisations are all highly arbitrary and problematic, and vary from nation to nation, film to film and even from historical study to historical study. Many films that seem to be

set in what is more conventionally considered late antiquity or early modernity, for instance, make more sense when understood in the context of medievalism. *The Return of Martin Guerre* (1982), which takes place in the 1540s, for example, or Mel Gibson's *The Passion of the Christ* (2004), set obviously at the beginning of the Christian Era, are widely discussed as medieval films because they depict, respectively, a confusion about identity and an obsession with Christ's physical suffering that is associated with the Middle Ages. Crucially and controversially, many viewers and reviewers also consider films to be medieval whose plots do not take place in the historical Middle Ages, but that instead adapt medieval literature (texts such as *1001 Nights*, the *Decamerone*, the *Canterbury Tales* or saints' lives) or adapt modern literature set at least in part in the Middle Ages, however imaginary (novels like *Pope Joan*, or *The Da Vinci Code* with its medieval backstory about the Knights Templar), or films set in an unspecified past or in a fantasy world that has medieval elements (like the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy (2001–2003), the *Shrek series* (2001–2013) or the *Harry Potter series* (2001–2011)).

Because much work on medieval film has been undertaken by moonlighting medievalists in the United States, United Kingdom and Australia, often for the explicit purpose of teaching and making medieval studies accessible, it concentrates on recent Hollywood films or other famous films widely available on DVD. A certain canon of medieval films is emerging across many Anglophone studies, course syllabi and websites. Among the most famous and most frequently discussed medieval films are those mentioned at the beginning of this chapter (*The Seventh Seal*, *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*, *The Name of the Rose*, *A Knight's Tale*, *Kingdom of Heaven* and *Beowulf*), but popular Hollywood and Hollywoodesque productions are also often included, like *Excalibur* (1981), *Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves* (1991), *Braveheart* (1995), *The Messenger: The Story of Joan of Arc* (1999), *Black Knight* (2001), *King Arthur* (2004) and *The Da Vinci Code* (2006).

The earlier and international history of the genre is yet to be written, though some outstanding films are famous enough to have made it into the canon. Since the very beginning of cinema, in the final years of the nineteenth century, films have depicted medieval and Gothic scenes, from the execution of Joan of Arc to Wagnerian operas. Medieval film flourished during the silent era, especially in 1920s France, Germany, Italy and the United States, with Carl Theodor Dreyer's Danish–French film *The Passion of Joan of Arc* (1928) now the most cited. Other famous examples are Paul Wegener's *Golem* (1920), Wallace Worsley's *Hunchback of Notre Dame* (1923) and Fritz Lang's *Nibelungen* (1924). Classic Hollywood historical epics from the studio era such as *Ivanhoe* (1952) and *El Cid* (1961) also frequently represented the

Middle Ages. Japanese, Russian and French auteur films have repeatedly depicted their country's medieval past, for instance, Akira Kurosawa's *Rashomon* (1950) and *The Seven Samurai* (1954), Sergei Eisenstein's *Alexander Nevsky* (1938) and Andrei Tarkovsky's *Andrei Rublev* (1966), Robert Bresson's *Lancelot of the Lake* (1974) and Eric Rohmer's *Perceval* (1978); often mentioned also is the Egyptian Youssef Chahine's *El Naser Salah el Dine/Saladin* (1963). Imaginative representations of the Middle Ages in narrative feature films are closely linked to those in other audio-visual media. This is in part due to shared conceptions of the Middle Ages across different media, but also due to commercial strategies that tie in films with interactive games played on consoles, computers, arcade machines, social networks or mobile phones as well as with cartoons, books and merchandise. The distinction between film and other media is further eroded because films are increasingly watched not in the cinema but accessed through downloads, DVDs, television or YouTube clips. So it makes sense to study television programmes as well as digital and role-playing games in the context of medieval films, and a further inclusion of video art, short films and documentaries would be just as fruitful.

One of the most hotly debated issues in the current study of medieval film is whether it is helpful to call this diverse tradition a genre. The reasons put forward in favour of this label are mostly pragmatic and heuristic: recognising that a medievalist tradition connects certain films with each other and with other works or modes of thought can help us to understand them and to understand conceptions of the past. Most medieval films, however, like most films, do not fit neatly into just one genre category. Many famous films set in the Middle Ages such as *El Cid*, *Kingdom of Heaven* and *Beowulf* belong to the established genre of historical epics, which promise larger-than-life heroes, fates and feelings to the viewers; many are also fantasy films, animations, literary adaptations and children's films. Medieval film has also been argued to share certain genre characteristics, motifs and plot structures with *film noir* (insofar as medieval films such as *Rashomon* have noir characteristics; and *noir* films such as Billy Wilder's *Double Indemnity* (1944) are influenced by medieval romances), with Westerns (especially in their shared interest in the male hero on horseback, evident, for example, in *El Cid* and *Kingdom of Heaven*), and with science fiction films (for example, in the medievalism of George Lucas's *Star Wars* films (1999–)). Medieval films, however, can come in all traditional genre forms from detective film (*The Name of the Rose*) to musical (*Camelot* (1967)).

Medievalism has also sometimes been spotted in films not overtly concerned with the Middle Ages. In cases like *Groundhog Day* (1993) or *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* (2000), this is simply because a film's narrative features

a quest or a story of sin and redemption, both of which can also be found in medieval romances and plays; in such cases the comparison can be misleading because it could equally well be made with many other narrative forms from antiquity to postmodernity. However, considering films not set in or overtly concerned with the Middle Ages in the context of medievalism can also allow surprising insights into both the films and the medieval material or the past to which they are compared. Medieval films often aim to destabilise the periodisation of history into Middle Ages and modernity, and it could be said that the less a film explicitly references the Middle Ages *as such*, the less it relies on this periodisation. For the moment, the inclusive definition of medieval film – comprising anything that is perceived to be medieval by film-makers and audiences, including academic audiences – has proved fruitful for both medievalism studies and film studies insofar as it has yielded interesting and valid interpretations of films such as *Pulp Fiction* (1994), *Se7en* (1995) or *In Bruges* (2008), including many films which had been overlooked or underrated in film studies, and has widened our understanding of medievalism, its working and its value for twentieth- and twenty-first-century culture and people.

How (and why) do we judge a medieval film?

The contentious inclusion into the corpus of what could in a judgemental way be called ‘pseudo-medieval films’, especially those veering towards the fantastic, leads straight to one of the most controversial issues in medieval film: the issue of accuracy and authenticity. Many academics have tended to judge medieval films on the basis of whether they are accurate or not, by which is meant whether the historical characters and events, and the details of costume, sets and make-up, match what is known about medieval reality or what is stated in medieval sources. Others, predominantly literary and cultural historians drawing on the sophisticated self-reflexive discipline of historiography, have spent many pages and pixels pointing out that what current historians think they know about the medieval past is not necessarily accurate or even academically agreed upon anyway, and that film-makers can only do so much to attempt to include the latest research. Such scholars, like Sarah Salih and William Woods, have instead preferred the term ‘authenticity’ and suggested that what matters to audiences is not so much whether a medieval film uses fourteenth-century armour in a fifteenth-century setting, but if it ‘feels’ right.¹ Do the characters behave as we expect medieval people to behave, or are they just contemporary people dressed up in historical costumes? Do buildings and artefacts look as we expect medieval fabrications to look? An authentic-looking representation is not necessarily an accurate or realistic one. Film sets that resemble high medieval manuscript

illuminations in their two-dimensionality and heavy lines, for example, are often perceived to be particularly authentic in capturing a medieval spirit, though the illuminators' art does not accurately reflect the way the medieval world looked or was seen by contemporaries. It has been pointed out how ironic it is that one of the most common ways of giving medieval sets an authentic feel is to make medieval buildings look as old and weathered as they do now, even when at the time of the setting they had just been built. Many films play with rather than hide the paradoxes involved in recreating the past for the screen, and this self-reflexivity about the characteristics of film as a medium is precisely part of their appeal.

What is most surprising is the extent, ferocity and persistence of these discussions about accuracy and authenticity. Whether a medieval film is 'good' or 'bad' is the question asked not only by reviewers, but also by academics who usually see analysis rather than evaluation as the core of their job. Kevin Harty's *The Reel Middle Ages* set the tone as a foundational encyclopaedia of medieval films that often rates them according to their accuracy and faithfulness to medieval sources as well as according to their general filmic qualities (calling Pasquale Festa Campanile's *The Chastity Belt* (1967) a 'badly made mishmash' or Jack Cardiff's *The Long Ships* (1963) 'a disaster and an embarrassment').² John Aberth's *A Knight at the Movies* systematically measures a range of medieval films by how closely they approach 'the elusive grail of historically accurate, but still entertaining films about the Middle Ages', and castigates 'horrible distortions of history' and 'sheer historical nonsense'.³ So what is it in medieval film that provokes such strong value statements and emotional responses, such a desire to judge in even the normally distanced academic discourse? The emotional stakes are high in many cinematic experiences that promise larger-than-life feelings, escape or humour. The stakes are high also because films, more than other genres of medievalism, do shape audiences' ideas of history. Although viewers of historical films are usually well aware that they are watching narrative fiction films, our views of history are subtly influenced by filmic representations – and this includes professional historians' views of events and knowledge outside their specialist areas or formed before their training. A viewer who knows that the chimeras on the towers of Notre Dame cathedral in Paris were added only in the nineteenth century might not take kindly to a film like *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* (1939) showing them in place in the fifteenth century (see Figure 7).

Yet even if she is a professional art historian, she might not know whether a certain road was cobbled or not, whether a certain king resented his mother or not, whether a certain year yielded a good harvest or not; and films might suggest answers that she might unconsciously accept as fact. No film can ever



Figure 7 *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, 1939: The hunchback and the nineteenth-century gargoyles.

get everything ‘right’: while there might be an objective answer to whether a certain road was cobbled at a given moment, there might be no records of this fact so that no modern scholar or viewer will have access to the answer, and for complex phenomena like emotions or motivations, there are no ‘right’ answers in any case, only more or less plausible interpretations. Films can never provide a transparent window into the past or represent ‘history as it actually was’, and they should not be dismissed for not doing so, because even the present is not transparent to those participating in it.

Nevertheless, there is an issue of accountability in the representation of history, of due diligence and attention paid to the accepted facts (however few there are) rather than their wilful manipulation. A film-maker’s primary aim might be to make a good and successful film, tell a great story, revive a myth, entertain or express something. But she also has a responsibility to history and to the present because as long as one of the elements depicted in the film still persists or has ramifications in contemporary society, its filmic representation has a political charge. Often, the persisting element is a nation, set of beliefs or group of people. The look of a particular street or a cathedral begins to matter, for example, if the splendour of the architecture celebrates a glorious past of a nation (be that in contrast to its modern decline or as the roots of its modern superiority). That Ridley Scott’s *Robin Hood* (2010) depicts war as pointless violence is politically relevant when the

United States and other Western nations are frequently involved in wars in the Middle East. That *Kingdom of Heaven* represents an explicitly Muslim leader, Saladin, as wise and noble is politically relevant because many of these wars are understood as wars against Muslims. That *Braveheart* shows the medieval Scottish and English as distinct peoples is politically relevant in a United Kingdom in which both belong to the same state. Even that *Harry Potter*, commonly seen as a medieval film because of its medievalist sets, motifs, monsters and intertexts, depicts a private boarding school as a place for amazing learning, friendship and adventure is politically relevant in countries in which private schools are controversial in their elitism.

As these examples already indicate, this political and emotional charge applies to films that self-consciously represent fiction as much as to those that purport to depict history. The Oscar-winning Pixar–Disney production *Brave* (2012) is a case in point: an animated fairy tale that never claims a setting in any sort of reality. But the characters speak with Scottish accents, have Scottish names, wear tartan, play bagpipes, have white skin and red hair and decorate their surroundings with Celtic knots, so that a vaguely medieval Scotland is suggested as a setting. That this past Scotland (however imaginary) is an independent kingdom, run by a bumbling but well-meaning leader, is politically charged, especially given the film was produced and released during a period of intense political pressure towards Scottish independence. That the plot, moreover, tells the story of Princess Merida learning to make up her own mind rather than follow tradition in the decision on who is to rule this kingdom, issues a clear message in favour of a referendum (though not necessarily in favour of independence itself).

What characterises a medieval film?

As in many medieval films, in *Brave* the plot explicitly makes the point that even an imaginary past matters to the present. Time in the storyworld passes in an unexpected way, from present not into the past but into legend. Legend is not fiction distinguished from reality, but simply past distinguished from the present. We learn that the ‘legend’ that King Fergus loves to tell about losing his leg to the demon bear Mordu has actually happened in the storyworld, because we witness the fight at the beginning of the film. The same goes for a story that Merida’s mother tells her about a kingdom divided between four princes, one of whom wants all the power for himself and splits from the others (which can be seen as an analogy to England lording it over Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland). While Merida dismisses this as a mere ‘nice story’, her mother teaches her that ‘legends are lessons, they ring with truth’, and indeed it turns out that this legend, too, was historical reality



Figure 8 *Brave* (2012): Princess Merida discovers that legends are history.

within the film, when Merida discovers the four princes' abandoned castle (see Figure 8). Realising that Murdo is none other than the evil prince upon whom a spell has been cast and that his selfishness really led to his kingdom's demise allows Merida to make her peace with her family and avoid a similar fate for her own kingdom.

This sense of the past as a mythical or legendary pre-history, a time before history proper, is common to many medieval films, and refers not only to the past within the film's storyworld, but also to the Middle Ages in which they are set. It distinguishes medieval films from most historical films about later periods. In fact, it is one of the few characteristics that could be claimed to be a genre convention for medieval film (although it has also been argued that this is the case for Hollywood films rather than European films in which the Middle Ages can still be considered part of the continuous history of nations). Of course, it is impossible for all medieval films from such a variety of cinematic genres, industries, auteurs, traditions, nations and periods to share the same characteristics, techniques or views of the Middle Ages. There are nevertheless some icons of the medieval, that is, visual or acoustic short-cuts that evoke the period across a large number of films, such as knights, church bells, bad teeth and dirt. There are also some thematic and conceptual characteristics that have been observed in a wide range of medieval films: queerness (in films like Bertrand Tavernier's *The Passion of Beatrice* (1987));⁴ an interest in writing and visuality coupled with self-reflexivity about film as a medium (for example, in Carl Theodor Dreyer's *The Passion of Joan of Arc* (1928)); and the depiction of the Middle Ages as an age before rationalism, individualism and capitalism (in Luis Trenker's *Condottieri* (1937), for instance). None of these is claimed to define medieval film, in the sense that any film featuring one or more of them has to be a medieval one, or any film featuring none of them cannot be a medieval one.

The one characteristic that every medieval film shares by definition is that it is made at a great temporal distance from the period it depicts as unfolding before our eyes, and this special relationship to history and time is usually thematised in the plot. Apart from the portrayal of history as legend, this also often takes the form of a conceptualisation of time as non-linear and an embracing of anachronism, and of an emphasis on the present moment, as will be illustrated in the following.⁵

When the Middle Ages are depicted not as a real period in the past, but as a legendary pre-history, as they so frequently are in medieval films, they come close to being imaginary. Studies from a large variety of theoretical and empirical perspectives have fruitfully approached medieval film as giving expression to the imaginary or fantasy. The ‘Once upon a time’ in which fairy tales from Grimm to Disney take place is often a world modelled on the medieval past, and the related genre of fantasy is also shaped in its core by medievalism, from its beginnings with Tolkien through to *Harry Potter*. A basic psychoanalytically derived argument is that fantasy, the supernatural, the uncanny or the imaginary are whatever cannot be understood from the point of view of a modern, rational, scientific world view: ghosts, fairies, apparitions, miracles, visions, dreams, callings and fate. These diverse occurrences, concepts and beings in medieval films are conspicuously incompatible with our world view and beg to be understood somehow. Medieval worlds as they are imagined on film often allow for the supernatural to be real, or at least to be believed to be real by some of the characters. Witches, miracle-working saints, visionaries and people led by a supernatural calling (such as Joan of Arc, Hildegard of Bingen and St Francis of Assisi) are common characters even in medieval films purporting to represent history, while the more fictional films like John Boorman’s *Excalibur* (1981) or *Brave* can veer into fairy-tale territory and often represent sorcerers, dragons, monsters and unicorns.

Conversely, this depiction of a world in which the supernatural is possible in turn makes strange the rational modern world view and re-enchants it to an extent (just as the imaginary is actually real in a number of theories). From the perspective of a medieval film, a modern phenomenon like a robotic assembly line, in which machines produce a car or a newspaper seemingly by themselves, becomes a source of wonder. In the Disney animation *The Sword in the Stone*, it is Merlin’s magic rather than a dishwasher that cleans dishes without human effort: dirty plates and pans move along by themselves to be cleaned by self-propelled brushes and sponges (see Figure 9).

The allusion to modern industrial production is explicit: ‘What a medieval muddle. We’ll have to modernise it. Start an assembly line system’, says Merlin, who had time-travelled into the 1960s. Rather than a modern



Figure 9 *The Sword in the Stone*, 1963: Merlin's medieval dishwasher powered by magic.

scientific world view being imposed on the medieval setting, we are left impressed by the marvellousness of our modern reality.

The relationship assumed in the cinema between the legendary pre-history of the Middle Ages and the present is often one of contrast: a great watershed is imagined between the two that makes the Middle Ages the opposite of modernity; an Other that can be idealised in the Romantic tradition or vilified in the Reformation and Enlightenment tradition, or, most commonly, a bit of both. There are often proto-modern elements introduced into the medieval period, such as a forward-thinking character at odds with his retrograde world (like Merlin in *The Sword in the Stone*, Merida in *Brave* or the sceptical William of Baskerville in *The Name of the Rose*), making it easy for modern viewers to empathise with him or her. This intersects with the perception of the Middle Ages as a monolithic age resisting change, where time was largely static and historical progress marginal. The Middle East in crusading films especially is often portrayed as a place stuck in a medieval past dominated by blind faith and misogyny, while the West may have developed and become modern. However, it has recently been suggested that as the Western experience of modernity is becoming more insecure and chaotic, the Middle Ages are no longer an Other, but a mirror image of our own experience of 'a weak state, corporate feudalism, personal insecurity, and physical trial'.⁶

It is not just historical time that does not necessarily progress chronologically in medieval film; the time flow within the plot is often likewise

suspended or distorted and not measurable with clocks and calendars. The unusual conception of time in medieval film has been analysed from a variety of theoretical perspectives; key concepts here are anachronism, ‘time images’, memory, queer time and discontinuous film reception. The notion of ‘queer time’ associated chiefly with Judith Halberstam – that is, the idea that straight sexuality and straight timelines, especially the normative life cycle, are linked – has been used mainly to understand the cross-temporal desires aroused by medieval films, including those for queer figures like ‘men in tights’ and the most famous cross-dresser in Western history, Joan of Arc. The way in which viewers experience the time during which they are watching or engaging with the film has also been a focus in studies of medieval film inspired by film theory, paying attention especially to the now often discontinuous reception of cinematic films through the multimedia form of DVDs.

Anachronism has been the most frequently deployed concept in attempts to grasp the temporality of medieval films. The term is usually used negatively to point out inconsistencies or ‘goofs’ such as visible telegraph poles in medieval landscapes, or modern types of plough in medieval fields. In films striving for an accurate representation of history, this is a valid, if not necessarily important, criticism. However, anachronisms in many medieval films are part of a conscious strategy of mixing time periods. Brian Helgeland’s *A Knight’s Tale* is the paradigmatic example of a film using anachronisms so evident that they could not possibly be unintentional oversights, such as a Nike swish as a blacksmith’s mark on armour, and stadium rock music accompanying a tournament. These anachronisms are not mistakes, but instead reflect the film’s technique of making accessible to present viewers what medieval knights and audiences may have felt when wearing the equivalent of quality sports gear and attending top sporting events. Part of the enjoyment that medieval films offer comes from such clever and knowing anachronisms.

The idea of ‘time images’ developed by film scholar Gilles Deleuze has also been adapted by a number of critics of medieval films. Whereas film normally depicts ‘action images’, that is, movements of people and things in time, some films, according to Deleuze, instead contain images that aim to show the operation of time itself, paradigmatically in ‘crystal time images’ where past and present are both visible and change places.⁷ In *Faust* (1926), for example, the devil Mephisto, in order to tempt Faust into a pact with him, shows Faust an image of his young self in an apparition in a bowl of poison he holds in his hand, and subsequently returns him to that youthful state (see Figure 10).

Like many medieval films, *Faust* goes beyond Deleuze’s concept and also shows the future as part of the time image (in this case, the dead Faust’s skull



Figure 10 *Faust* (1926): a spectre of the past visible in the present.

appears reflected in the bowl). The sense that it is only the moment that matters, and that the moment contains every other moment, characterises many medieval films. It explains the affinity of medieval films with the present-focused youth culture, observable in films such as *Black Knight* and *A Knight's Tale*.⁸ It may also go some way towards explaining the perceived close relationship between the Middle Ages and the equally present-minded childhood, often expressed in the idea of the Middle Ages as Europe's childhood. As regards film, this link is evident in the fact that so many medieval films are aimed at children or at reawakening the childhood dreams of adults, especially those of a fairy-tale or fantasy variety, or pay particular attention to the childhood of the protagonists (for example, Uli Edel's *Sword of Xanten* (2004) or Trenker's *Condottieri*).

Psychoanalytic conceptions of time and memory have also been found to be helpful in understanding medieval films, especially the Freudian idea that a person's memory is mutable and changes according to the needs of her present. The past as depicted in medieval films, both the medieval past of the general setting and the personal past of the characters within the plot, is often not an objectively verifiable past 'as it actually was', but a past with all the uncertainties of a memory and typically clustered around a painful experience. Many medieval films (such as *Braveheart*, *The Messenger: The Story of Joan of Arc*, *Sword of Xanten*, *Kingdom of Heaven*, *The Da Vinci Code* and *Tristan & Isolde* (2006)) tell stories of a childhood trauma or injury, which

has left a vivid (sometimes initially repressed) memory that turns out to be vital in the course of the plot. Ridley Scott's historical epic *Robin Hood* (2010), which is based on a fictional story but takes pains to depict a historically plausible gritty world, holds on to the idea that there is an accurate version of the past that can be objectively recalled, but shows that it takes effort, a community and a purpose to achieve this. The eponymous hero Robin Longstride initially believes that 'my father abandoned me to the world of men when I was 6 years old', but he later recovers his memories of his father, the revolutionary democrat Thomas Longstride, who had not abandoned him but had been executed before his eyes by the kings' men, as we see in memory-images taken from a general vantage point. The same conception of history in the service of the present applies, one could extrapolate, to the remembrance of the Middle Ages today.

The cinema as cathedral

Many film and media theorists have gone much further than pointing to the medievalism of some films, and argued that all film is medieval. They claim that the inventions of cinema and new media reintroduce a culture of visuality that returns to medieval art and sensibilities after the long intermediate modern period dominated by print. In film theory, nothing epitomises the Middle Ages more than the cathedral: a profoundly anti-modern, pre-Enlightenment, pre-Rationalism space, where time stands still in an eternal visual splendour appreciated by a community of believers. 'Ceci tuera cela', 'this will kill that', says Frollo in Victor Hugo's *Hunchback of Notre Dame* and its many film versions, looking from the new invention of the printed book up to Notre Dame cathedral: this printing will replace that culture of monumental visuality. This has been taken up by many film theorists for whom film appears as a new kind of cathedral, or sometimes manuscript: a work of visual beauty that defines the era. The same pattern has been evoked whenever audio-visual media have evolved, with just about every innovation from the Internet to 3D films having been claimed to return to medieval modes of being and seeing.

A much-lamented contemporary development is that medieval studies are gradually disappearing from school and university curricula, while the representation of the Middle Ages in popular culture is burgeoning. There is arguably a link between the two trends, as historian Valentin Groebner points out: until the mid-twentieth century, the Middle Ages could still serve as an origin myth for nations and religious communities, the idealised seeds of an unbroken continuity to the present. In showing that current customs and entities perceived to have medieval roots, from festivals to folk

dress to nation states, were in fact nineteenth-century inventions, historians have not diminished popular interest in these ‘medievalisms’, says Groebner, but contributed to their transferral from the historical past into the sphere of fantasy, legend and imagination.⁹ This is precisely the sphere in which medieval film had already placed the Middle Ages. In any case, liberating the Middle Ages from the grasp of the academy into the open-to-all arms of popular culture might be cause for celebration rather than despair. Who says academic engagements with the Middle Ages are more important than, or indeed fundamentally different from, cultural or artistic ones? And who knows which future Tolkien or Jacques Le Goff might become interested in medieval matters by watching *Brave* or *The Seventh Seal*?

NOTES

1. Sarah Salih, ‘Cinematic Authenticity-Effects and Medieval Art: A Paradox’, in Anke Bernau and Bettina Bildhauer (eds.), *Medieval Film* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009), pp. 20–39; William F. Woods, *The Medieval Filmscape* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2014).
2. Kevin Harty, *The Reel Middle Ages: American, Western and Eastern European, Middle Eastern, and Asian Films about Medieval Europe* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 1999), pp. 50, 170.
3. John Aberth, *A Knight at the Movies: Medieval History on Film* (New York: Routledge 2003), pp. 303, 298.
4. For more on queerness in medieval film, see Tison Pugh’s chapter in this volume.
5. On concepts of time in medievalism in general see also Stephanie Trigg’s chapter in this volume.
6. Steve Guthrie, ‘Time Travel, Pulp Fictions, and Changing Attitudes towards the Middle Ages: Why You Can’t Get Renaissance on Somebody’s Ass’, in Gail Ashton and Daniel T. Kline (eds.), *Medieval Afterlives in Popular Culture* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012) pp. 99–111.
7. Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time Image*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Robert Galeta (London: Continuum, 1989 [1985]), pp. 80–94.
8. Laurie A. Finke and Martin B. Shichtman, *Cinematic Illuminations: The Middle Ages on Film* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009), p. 339.
9. Valentin Groebner, *Das Mittelalter hört nicht auf: Über historisches Erzählen* (Munich: Beck, 2008), p. 133.

4

HELEN DELL

Musical medievalism and the harmony of the spheres

What is medieval music? It seems a simple enough question. Historically speaking it is clear-cut: it is music composed in the Middle Ages. But a number of assumptions are brought to its study, production and reception that are neither historical nor musical; we bring to the music already held notions, fantasies and ideologies of the 'medieval' of which we may not be entirely aware. We gather them from multiple sources and they serve to guide our preferences and affect the way we make history and theory. They also guide the way we make and hear medieval music. The sound itself sometimes matters less than the words used to describe it. It is these words and their attendant images, by which the fantasy is conveyed, that I wish to investigate in this chapter. John Haines has entitled his recent book *Music in films on the Middle Ages: authenticity vs. fantasy*.¹ My concern here is with the fantasy of authenticity in medieval music. My question is: how does music *become* authentically medieval when we can neither make nor hear medieval music?² We cannot know what it sounded like; what then gives the music *we* make the seal of authenticity? The response my chapter offers concerns a particular medievalist fantasy, one derived from the idea of the harmony of the spheres, which informed the thought of musicologists, music historians, performers and listeners in the second half of the twentieth century.

Almost anything can pass muster as 'medieval' in the modern imagination. The term occurs in a variety of discourses with a bewildering diversity of meaning and valency. It is possible, however, to identify certain broad categories of medievalism. These categories are organised around crucial, related antagonisms, sites of tension where one set of characteristics attempts to exclude the other and monopolise the field. The 'medieval', however it is conceived, is generally presented as monolithic. It may be a Middle Ages of 'universally accepted opinions' as Edgar de Bruyne envisaged,³ where nothing changes and everyone agrees. But there is an opposing Middle Ages. In the medievalist imagination descriptors of the Middle Ages tend to operate

on a binary logic of either / or: the ‘medieval’ as stable *or* unstable, spiritual *or* corporeal and so on (see the following table). Categories are also linked by associations of likeness or compatibility, however, in a relationship of *and* rather than *or*:

spiritual	pure	peaceful	orderly	stable	rational	ascetic	civilised
corporeal	impure	violent	chaotic / frenzied	unstable	irrational / sensual / emotional	sybaritic	barbaric
harmonious	Apollonian	native / homely	same	static	light	adult	
discordant	Dionysian	foreign / exotic	different	dynamic	dark	childlike	

Spirituality, purity, order, harmony and so on have a tendency to cluster together; likewise corporeality, impurity, chaos and dissonance, although these pairings, vertical and horizontal, are neither indissoluble nor unequivocal.

The ‘medieval’ may alternatively be characterised as a site of ‘violent contrasts’ between opposing states, as Johan Huizinga argued in one of the most enduringly influential accounts of the medieval world view, *The waning of the middle ages*.⁴ The either / or relationships in the previous table of medieval fantasies are not static but subject to violent reversal. Our understanding of the Middle Ages and our attitudes and responses to them are riven by ambivalence, although the urge to cling to a monolithic Middle Ages generally disallows its acknowledgement; the logic of binarism conceals it. Medievalism is, however, profoundly conflicted. The *pre-modern* is positioned as what we moderns must reject in order to *be* modern, but the rejection is tinged with nostalgia for what we believe we have lost in the process: Huizinga’s medieval ‘child-life’⁵ of wild vitality and spontaneity, or, alternatively, a ‘fatherly’ middle age for a modern child, a Golden Age of reason, stability, and order. It is the second alternative that derives its appeal from the idea of the harmony of the spheres.

The music we call medieval reflects the same conflictual patterns. We can see this struggle played out in studies, performances and recordings. This chapter reflects on some of the means by which medievalist discourses, musical and textual (the latter being the many and varied discourses that surround its study, performance and reception), inscribe the medievalist dichotomies I have proposed earlier. Since I believe we bring our medieval fantasies *to* as much as or more than *from* the music, it is to this that I will pay most attention.

‘Sounding number’ and musical enjoyment

In his 1993 book *Discarding Images*, Christopher Page, the influential medieval music historian and director, analysed a phenomenon in the study of

medieval music which he called ‘cathedralism’.⁶ His essay was a landmark account for a study of musical medievalism because it questioned a much-loved fantasy of the Middle Ages among scholars in the mid-to late-twentieth century, promulgated in a variety of disciplines and disseminated widely through teaching and publication. Many musicologists, Page argued, viewed medieval music in the same terms that writers like Erwin Panofsky⁷ and Otto von Simson⁸ used for medieval architecture in the 1950s. The reason for this convergence was that ‘music and architecture are sisters, since both are children of number; they have equal dignity, inasmuch as architecture mirrors eternal harmony, as music echoes it’. John Ganim, in his chapter in this volume, cites Pugin’s defence of thirteenth-century Gothic, because of its purity, integrity and structural logic. An analogous vision of medieval purity, order and harmony is invoked here.

Modern scholarship has privileged patristic and medieval sources which support the fantasy of a rational and ascetic medieval world view based on number. St. Augustine (354–430) is a key figure in this dream building. He gives support to the claims of number, for instance in the title of the final chapter of his *De musica*, Book VI, ‘The ascent from rhythm in sense to the immortal rhythm which is in truth’.⁹ This account puts the matter succinctly. There is said to be in music,

a natural hierarchy, reflected in the harmony of the scale, that is based on the simple progression of numbers from unity to complexity. From the perfect consonances of the unison and its octave (expressed as 1:1 and 1:2) we pass to the ratios of 2:3, the musical interval of the fifth, which functions musically as the opposite pole of the harmonic spectrum in its role as the dominant degree of the scale, and is the next most consonant, and fundamental interval; and its inverse, the fourth, or subdominant, with a ratio of 3:4.¹⁰

This fundamental harmony, ordering the universe and everything in it, has often been expressed as the harmony of the spheres or *musica mundana*. By this light all creation is derived from simple relationships between the first four integers: 1, 2, 3 and 4. This notion has ramifications for every aspect of human life: bodily, emotional, moral and spiritual. In particular, for my purposes, it has ramifications for sounding medieval music and how the post-medieval world has understood it.

The story of medieval music told by historians begins with the legendary figure of Pythagoras (sixth century BC) who, it was said, heard one day the ringing of different-sized blacksmith’s hammers. According to the legend, these hammers rang out for him the perfect consonances. Next comes Plato’s *Timaeus* and the Myth of Er, in which the eight sirens are to be seen, sitting upon their circles (stars and planets) all moving at different

speeds while each sings a single note, and ‘the eight together form a harmony’.¹¹ Augustine’s understanding of Plato was mediated by his knowledge of Neoplatonist writers such as Plotinus (205–269/270), for whom it was the joint efforts of all, good and evil, which make the universe good: ‘The Universe is good [...] when everyone throws in his own voice towards a total harmony, singing out a life – thin, harsh, imperfect though it be [...] [W]hat is evil in the single soul will stand a good thing in the universal system.’¹²

Boethius (c 480–c 524) is another key figure in the ancestry of medieval music and musical medievalism. Of particular significance is his division of music into three levels: *musica instrumentalis* (human-made, sounding music, lowliest of the three), *musica humana* (the music of the human body and soul, keeping each in health and in harmony with the other), and, lastly, above and governing all, *musica mundana* (the divine, unheard music of the cosmos which we usually know as the music of the spheres).¹³

Such an idea was, and continues to be, very appealing. It is orderly, harmonious, purposeful and glorious. Harmony fits the chaos of human history and human experience into a meaningful pattern, offering shelter to the nakedness of the human condition in an unpredictable world. *Harmonia* meant precisely that, a fitting together, as Boethius expounded in the theory of *musica humana*: ‘For what unites the incorporeal nature of reason with the body if not a certain harmony and, as it were, a careful tuning of low and high pitches as though producing one consonance.’¹⁴ Through *harmonia* difference is resolved into consonance and individual evil into universal good. This harmonious idea has proved so enduringly attractive that it is present, explicitly or implicitly, as a central component of notions, ideologies and fantasies about the medieval world.

Twentieth-century musicologists like Nino Pirrotta and Ernest H. Sanders, citing Panofsky and Simson among others, adopted the ‘cathedralist’ account of medieval music underpinned by the harmony of the spheres. Sanders argued: ‘[L]ike the cathedral, the motet may be termed a Summa; medieval man molded music, as *numerus sonorus* (sounding number), into a composite whole, an artefact symbolising the transcendental order of *musica mundana*.’¹⁵ As Page pointed out, these accounts assume absolute consensus among medieval people as to what constitutes value in music.¹⁶ ‘Medieval man’ has a single voice on the matter, or at least the kind of thinking medieval man who counted: Boethius’s *musicus*, the true musician, ‘who exhibits the faculty of forming judgments according to speculation or reason relative to and appropriate to music’, as opposed to the composer or the singer.¹⁷ As the basis for medieval music-making and thus for its modern study and performance, this idea assumes that medieval musical enjoyment was based solely

on an appreciation of its basis in divine number.¹⁸ This assumption has had a profound effect on how we make and hear what we call medieval music.

Such an assumption elides, however, some of the complexities in patristic and medieval thought. Augustine himself confessed to his own difficulties with musical enjoyment:

I admit that I still find some enjoyment in the music of hymns, which are alive with your praises, when I hear them sung by well-trained melodious voices. But I do not enjoy it so much that I cannot tear myself away. I can leave it when I wish. But if I am not to turn a deaf ear to music, which is the setting for the words which give it life, I must allow it a position of some honor in my heart, and I find it difficult to assign it to its proper place. For sometimes I feel that I treat it with more honor than it deserves. I realize that when they are sung these sacred words stir my mind to greater religious fervor and kindle in me a more ardent form of piety than they would if they were not sung [...] But I ought not to allow my mind to be paralysed by the gratification of my senses, which often leads it astray. For the senses are not content to take second place. Simply because I allow them their due, as adjuncts to reason, they attempt to take precedence and forge ahead of it, with the result that I sometimes sin in this way but am not aware of it until later.¹⁹

Augustine insists he can ‘tear [him]self away’ but, as he immediately confesses, it is not so simple, because, however he *wishes* to respond, his sensual pleasure in the music takes over and it troubles him. He has difficulty distinguishing precisely between a rational and a sensual enjoyment and is unsure, at the time, which is taking precedence. Augustine’s difficulty is instructive because, in telling it, he troubles the bland assumptions of scholars like Sanders and Pirotta that medieval listeners had no trouble enjoying music in a purely spiritual or rational sense and, unlike Augustine, had no difficulty making the distinction. This silencing of complexity and tension is how medieval fantasies of all kinds are maintained.

Augustine felt justified in giving some honour to his musical enjoyment. Christianised Pythagorean theory did, after all, offer a harmonising, non-oppositional logic of and / and, (as on the horizontal plane of my table) provided body and spirit are correctly positioned hierarchically. This was the aspect taken up by D. W. Robertson Jnr:

For medieval thinkers, the spirit and the flesh are not ‘two mighty opposites’ but a superior being and an inferior being whose struggle is like that between a lord and an intransigent vassal, a husband and a disobedient wife [...] Once the spirit triumphs, it rules with [the] harmony of virtue.²⁰

For us post-Romantics, Robertson argued, ‘[n]othing seems more natural in the analysis of events than the establishment of a polarity as a coordinate

system against which variation of any kind can be measured' but 'the medieval world was innocent of our profound concern for tension'.²¹ The difficulty with his assumption is, as Augustine's trouble confirms, that the battle is never finally won, the hierarchy never established beyond doubt. The tensions remain in spite of Robertson's attempts to obliterate them.

Robertson critiqued the fantasy of a polarised Middle Ages essentially like our own, but in his alternative assumption he bequeathed a fantasy of a Middle Ages of 'quiet hierarchies' as monolithic as the one he sought to depose.²² That is the nature of scholarly medievalism. Scholars expose the medievalism of others and in doing so reveal their own. Through him and his followers an idea was bruited about across various communities in academia and elsewhere, by countless circuitous paths, of a different Middle Ages, one of medieval people who did *not* think or enjoy like us. It follows that if we wish to appreciate them and their music the onus is on us to think like them, and even, as much as we can, become like them. We must cleanse our ears, our minds and our singing voices of all post-medieval detritus. There is no place in this endeavour where we can touch the medieval past while still acknowledging our own present.

Making authentic medieval music

How does this cleansing operation translate into performance? At the scholarly end of the music-making spectrum some of the English ensembles working over the past few decades give the clearest instance of a performance practice which attempted to strip away all post-medieval accretions and recover an authentically medieval performance. Musicologists are often also directors, so theories based on historical evidence have found fruition in performance. In the early 1980s a fierce struggle arose over what constituted musical value. For the 'authenticists' the worth of a performance relied first and foremost on its historical accuracy.²³ It was rare for anyone on that side of the debate to admit a personal preference in the music they made or argued for. Musical enjoyment was no excuse for inaccuracy.

For other performers of early music the answer was rather different. For Nick Wilson, who began his professional career as an early music singer in the 1990s, authenticity is found in the practice of music-making as much as in the evidence: '[I]n allowing practice to be our instructor, we find that it is precisely in the unfolding relationship between old and new (constraint and freedom, text and act) that authenticity properly understood is to be found.'²⁴ Wilson is espousing a practice which allows playfulness and frivolity, one that, while respecting its sources, does not deny its own enjoyment.²⁵ Underlying the attempt of the strict authenticists was the nostalgic idea of a medieval

purity – a sense of simplicity, rightness and harmony evoked by the music of the spheres which we are deemed to have lost. The authenticist struggle for historical accuracy was, like the harmony of the spheres itself, a nostalgic search for a pure, rational and meaningful origin. Purity is at stake whenever stripping back is called for.

Svetlana Boym has written of a nostalgia she names restorative, which ‘puts emphasis on *nostos* and proposes to rebuild the lost home’.²⁶ Since the rise of the authenticity movement much, but not all, English medieval music-making at the scholarly end has tended towards restoration; a great deal of effort has gone into rebuilding the lost home of the medieval via its music. But despite the hours of painstaking research, there always remains an element of invention in these attempts. It is not possible to speak of restoration. Richard Taruskin, an American musicologist who spoke out in the early 1980s against such claims, wrote, ‘It is when we talk about restoration that the trouble begins, and “authenticity” turns ugly’.²⁷ To speak of restoration, musicians and directors, claiming neutrality, had to erase their own part in the sound their ensembles produced, their own enjoyment and their own medieval dreaming.

Christopher Page was one who, in the 1980s and 1990s, argued strenuously for a performance practice based on the evidence. Like D. W. Robertson he revealed his own medieval fantasy in the process of exposing the fantasies of others. The practices listed here were those which, he believed, had to be stripped back in order to achieve the right sound:

- 1 the use of instruments in performances of [certain medieval repertories];
- 2 the use of too many instrumental colours in the performance of certain secular repertories [...];
- 3 successions of short pieces, each characterized by a different instrumentation to give the music novelty and variety;
- 4 the practice of doubling or replacing voices with instruments;
- 5 the ‘Arab’ hypothesis which looks to certain non-Western traditions in order to evolve performing styles for medieval song;
- 6 extending pieces, especially medieval monophonic songs, with swathes of improvisatory instrumental material;
- 7 ‘over-interpretation’.²⁸

Anything extraneous, anything flamboyant, anything that allowed the musicians some free rein was out of place.

Describing the quality of the sound that resulted from these strictures, Page made use of ‘a fine Middle English word: clanness, or “cleanness”’:

As used in the 14th century by the English poet of Sir Gawayn and the Green Knight (a man who knew the world of courts and chapels well), clanness is the quality of something that is pure (like a pearl) or of fine and precise workmanship (like an elaborate goblet). (32) Clanness can characterize the vessels used in the Eucharist or the goblets which serve men and women of exalted dignity in their banquets; it blurs the edges of earthly things with a nimbus of heaven, in other words, and yet it can make what is celestial seem clearer to human sense [...]. I believe that many English singers of the a cappella renaissance have captured this quality.²⁹

Donald Grieg, in his response to Page's essay, noticed the fantasy at work in his imagery:

'Pure' connotes images of innocence, of virginity, of the non-corporeal production of sound. The figure around which all these adjectives cohere and the metaphor they promote and sustain is that of the angel.³⁰

'[C]lanness' or purity rests on the notion of a disembodied, angelic music from which sounding music is born and to which it refers – the music of the spheres.

One trait Page did not mention in this essay but which was and remains a key element in early music singing is the lack of vibrato – the characteristic beat of a singer's voice – which, in polyphony, might blur the clarity of the perfect consonances. Very careful tuning of voices was essential.³¹ Page wrote, speaking of the performance of the thirteenth-century motet, 'The supreme goal is therefore accuracy, together with the strong, straight tone without vibrato that allows the ear to savour the purity of the perfect intervals and to detect the distinctive buzz that they possess when true.'³² English singers' voices were 'straight' for the good reasons Page outlined in this essay but also, I suggest, because the ideal of purity was better conveyed without vibrato with its constant reminders of the body. The sound of the English ensembles does not always reflect their philosophies. Different, less angelic impulses sometimes appear to intervene between the argument and the music. Page, when it came to performance, went for a livelier, earthier sound with his ensemble, Gothic Voices, than the vision of purity he offered in his 1993 essay might suggest. The sound he wanted was 'straight' but also 'strong', as he had commented in his earlier essay.³³ It had energy and was anything but pallid.

'Ther is no rose of swych vertu'

The anonymous late medieval carol 'Ther is no rose of swych vertu' (c. 1420) is well-loved and much-recorded so it provides a good opportunity for comparison between ensembles.³⁴ Also it is a carol of the incarnation, the

central Christian expression of the harmony of the spheres. It has been interpreted in performance by the Gothic Voices.³⁵

Many reviewers have not heard purity in the Gothic Voices despite the website description by their representative, Ben Rayfield, emphasising, '[e]xcellence, refinement, purity, spirituality'.³⁶ For instance, Clive Paget of *Limelight* noted recently that, in comparison to the Tallis Scholars, their ensemble had a 'saltier, more edgy tang'.³⁷ Dictated, no doubt, by the theme of the incarnation, 'Ther is no rose' is one of their purer performances in comparison with other, more strident, tracks on the same recording.³⁸ Nonetheless the sound palette of the Gothic Voices is more complex, has more colour, more edge, than other scholarly ensembles I have examined. On the other hand, Peter Phillips, director of the Tallis Scholars, an ensemble whose name has become almost synonymous with purity, laughed at a critic's remarks about the group's 'austere purity [which] seemed to take on an anti-sensual and unworldly intensity'.³⁹ Phillips had no qualms in saying that he had never cared for either purity or authenticity and that the Scholars' 'sound-world is an entirely modern invention, formulated with the aim of performing early music exactly as he [Phillips] wants to hear it'.⁴⁰

The sound does not always bear out the arguments but the signifier 'purity' and its cognates constantly appear whenever the 'medieval' is evoked, attaching themselves to a range of different sonorities. A very pure-sounding recording of this carol comes from an American ensemble, Chanticleer (from Chaucer's clear-singing rooster). 'Clear' is another of the words used to describe medieval singing. Like 'pure' and 'clean', it evokes a sound from which the debris of the body, and of post-medieval history, has been cleared away. Chanticleer voices barely trouble the air, as if they were indeed disembodied.⁴¹ This quality is achieved partly by a kind of singing that decreases the drive towards resolution, emphasising stillness and de-emphasising energy. The shape of each phrase and each section becomes less apparent. Each note is left hanging in the air. The carol is sung very lightly and softly, especially the burden, producing an effect of great delicacy and intimacy. The Gothic Voices performance, though slower in tempo, never loses its momentum.

'Ther is no rose' has been taken up by popular as well as scholarly ensembles.⁴² The interpretation favoured by the Mediaeval Baebes ensemble achieves, for the ear untutored to medieval music and unconcerned with its accurate reproduction, an effect somewhat similar to that of Chanticleer. There is the same hush, as if sound itself is a disturbance barely tolerated. The lengthened silences between the lines are palpable, especially as the singers pause at the half-lines as well. From the third verse the silence is replaced by a mere thread of voice drone.

Back in 1998 Katherine Blake, founder of the Baebes, assured prospective fans in an interview: ‘Your mind gets taken to a special, otherworldly place – a strange place of serenity, magic and beauty.’⁴³ This is a variant of the medieval fantasy undisguised by scholarly claims of neutrality. That is the value of responses in the field of popular music for an understanding of medievalism: the Baebes, unconcerned with evidence, present the unadorned fantasy to their fans, inviting a response in kind which the fans eagerly supply. In this exchange the word ‘authenticity’ resonates differently. One Amazon.com customer reviewer of this album, *The Rose*, states,

At times less polished than a group like Anonymous 4 or Trio Mediaeval [...] but I like to think that maybe a group of eight girls might have sung these songs in a casual setting centuries ago [...] The fact that it is not super polished and chamber choir-sounding makes it seem more authentic.⁴⁴

This listener demonstrates a ‘love of the medieval’ similar to that of the medievalist participants described by Daniel Kline elsewhere in this volume. Listening may be termed a passive pursuit but this listener’s imagination is active and the fantasy is shared with fellow enthusiasts. It is participation of a kind. He or she is unperturbed, or may not know, that the music, written by Katherine Blake, bears little resemblance to the fifteenth-century carol. In this case ‘authenticity’ is not an academic imperative but something more homely and familiar, recognisable across the centuries as it is embodied in the carol.

Another customer review states,

When my copy of *The Rose* arrived ... it was as if angels had dropped by to sing my spirit into heaven. Their voices were distinctive and harmonious, polished, yet still individual. My personal favorite cut is #7, ‘There Is No Rose of Swych Vertu’ [...] It’s exactly the kind of music I would expect from an angelic host. Simply elegant and hauntingly beautiful.⁴⁵

‘Angelic’ is a word frequently found in the Baebes’ listener reviews. The second line of this review could be describing the harmony of the spheres in which diversity is unified through harmony. These notions of harmony and spirituality and especially the figure of the angel are often hovering close by when music is called medieval.

What each of these ensembles demonstrates, in spite of their differences, is the attempt to allow the ‘res miranda’ (wonderful thing) of the incarnation to be borne by the music they make. There is in each interpretation a kind of pregnant stillness, suiting the wonder, for Christians, of the incarnation: the ‘heaven and earth in little space’ that was Christ, God and Man, carried in

Mary's womb. Each offers the incarnation as a harmonisation, a reconciliation between the spiritual and the bodily, the divine and the human.

Darkness was my light: Varg (wolf) Vikernes

So far I have focused on music embracing the idea of the harmony of the spheres which roughly corresponds to the top line of the earlier table. But what of those who favour darkness over light? Most extreme among the Heavy Metal groups using medieval themes are those sometimes categorised as Viking Metal. For Varg ('Count Grishnackh') Vikernes of the one-man Norwegian band, Burzum,⁴⁶ '[t]he "darkness" of the Christians was of course my "light"'. He wished to create with his music, "'darkness" in a far too "light", safe and boring world', although the inverted commas suggest that he appreciates just how problematic these reversals are.⁴⁷

J. R. R. Tolkien had a part to play in this endeavour, but not one he would have chosen:

Now, it is no surprise that a Catholic Englishman like Tolkien used [...] 'furious, church-burning Scandinavian berserkers' as models for some of the bad guys, and because he did I felt more drawn to these bad guys than to the good guys.⁴⁸

Vikernes's medievalism turns Tolkien's Middle Earth on its head. Hobbits and Dwarves are 'boring', elves are 'alien', but he feels 'a natural attraction to Sauron'. He finds he 'could easily identify with the fury of the "dark forces", and enjoyed their existence very much because they were making a boring and peaceful world dangerous and exciting'.⁴⁹

Tolkien's creation music in the *Silmarillion* is based on a version of the harmony of the spheres in which the unauthorised theme of the evil Melkor is effortlessly incorporated by Ilúvatar (the creator God) into his grand musical scheme. He tells Melkor:

[N]o theme may be played that hath not its uttermost source in me, nor can any alter the music in my despite. For he that attempteth this shall prove but mine instrument in the devising of things more wonderful, which he himself hath not imagined.⁵⁰

There are echoes of Plotinus here: 'What is evil in the single soul will stand a good thing in the universal system.'⁵¹

Those who, like Vikernes, align themselves with evil want a music that can stand its ground as a real opponent, and not become an instrument in the hands of an all-powerful Other. They will resist their darkness being incorporated into light, their dissonance harmonised into consonance. Many of

the following tags for Burzum on review site Allmusic.com read as if they have been gathered together on the basis of their reversal of the ideology of the harmony of the spheres: 'aggressive, angry, bitter, brooding, confrontational, eerie, fiery, gloomy, harsh, malevolent, manic, melancholy, menacing, nocturnal, outrageous, provocative, raucous, rebellious, theatrical, visceral'.⁵² 'Discordant' is not mentioned explicitly because Heavy Metal is almost generically discordant, but for a newcomer that is the first thing that strikes the ear: desolate, despairing, incomprehensible screams. In the face of that screaming, words hardly seem to matter.

Vikernes insists on heroic opposition to the boring world of contemporary Norway, but it is also a Romantic opposition to a world where dissonance is swallowed up in a harmonious whole and opposition is left with nowhere to stand. In an interview on the film 'Until the Light Takes us', he states, 'It's hard to know what to do to oppose something because dissident voices are not tolerated in contemporary society.'⁵³ Yet the internet is flooded with uncensored dissident voices. It is, ironically, the sheer mass of heterogeneous, permitted voices that silences. Vikernes has his own brand of purity to defend, that of 'pure blood' in Norway, assailed by 'interbreeding'.⁵⁴ Tolerance, the permission to 'interbreed' ideas, is a cruel opponent: it appears weak but it has the effect of consuming the adversary, as Melkor's theme is consumed within Ilúvatar's grand musical design. Vikernes and those like him hate tolerance, both for its weakness and its encompassing, stifling omnipotence. He calls for a foeman who may destroy but cannot silence him and finds it only in fantasy fiction. Again on his website (auto)biography he cries: '[Like Sauron] I would rather die fighting for what I believe in than live for anything else.'⁵⁵ The song 'War', from his 1992 debut album, Burzum, ends: 'Now I Am Dead / And Still We Must Never Give up / War.'⁵⁶ It might be laughable if it did not sound so wretched. Vikernes is screaming against a cloying, inescapable and consuming harmony.

In fact the words do matter. In any case, Vikernes backs up his screams with any number of words, and his notoriety has brought him much attention. After his conviction for church arson and for the murder of fellow musician Øystein Aarseth ('Euronymous') he spent 16 of his 21 year sentence behind bars. As Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke observed, 'Sensational publicity during the trial period guaranteed Vikernes the media role of an arch-satanist.'⁵⁷ He has capitalised on this persona. Despite (or, in some cases, because of) the gross racism of his propaganda he has achieved an international reputation. According to blogger Danko Jones, young people worldwide, including people of colour, wear Burzum T-shirts 'in the name of some sort of post-post-post bullshit hipsterism'.⁵⁸

It is through words more than anything else that the medieval age and its music have grown in our minds and taken up their various forms. Because of Vikernes many have discovered a medieval world of violent and unremitting defiance. Medievalism works first and foremost with words, whether they are the words of Plato, Augustine, Tolkien, Robertson or Vikernes. Whether it is a medieval age of quiet hierarchies or of brutal, pagan Norse battles, the harmony of the spheres, in its positive or negative aspect, has continued to resonate.

NOTES

1. John Haines, *Music in Films on the Middle Ages: Authenticity vs. Fantasy* (New York: Routledge, 2014).
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3. Edgar de Bruyne, *The Esthetics of the Middle Ages*, trans. Eileen B. Hennessy (New York: Frederick Ungar, 1969), p. 1.
4. Johan Huizinga, *The Waning of the Middle Ages*, trans. and adapted under author's direction (Edward Arnold, 1924, republished New York: Dover, 1999), p. 2.
5. Huizinga, *Waning*, p. 3.
6. Christopher Page, *Discarding Images: Reflections of Music and Culture in Medieval France* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), p. 10.
7. Erwin Panofsky, *Gothic Architecture and Scholasticism* (Cleveland, OH: World Publishing, 1957).
8. Otto von Simson, *The Gothic Cathedral: the Origins of Gothic Architecture and the Medieval Concept of Order* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1956).
9. W. F. Jackson Knight, *St. Augustine's de musica: A Synopsis* (Westport, CT: Hyperion Press, 1949), p. 85.
10. 'On the Pythagorean Tradition' www.fiddletree.com/reflections/on_the_pythagorean_traditi.htm.
11. Plato, *The Republic*, trans. Benjamin Jowett (New York: P. F. Collier & Son, 1901): www.ldysinger.com/MONS_423/01A_VisI_Pla_Cic/03_Myth_Er.htm.
12. Plotinus, in Joscelyn Godwin, *Music, Mysticism and Magic: A Sourcebook* (London: Arcana, 1986), p. 21.
13. Anicius Manlius Severinus Boethius, *Fundamentals of Music*, trans. with intro. and notes Calvin M. Bower, ed. Claude V. Palisca (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989) pp. 9–10.
14. Boethius, *Fundamentals*, p. 10.
15. Sanders, 'The Medieval Motet', in Wulf Arlt *et al.* (eds.), *Gattungen der Musik in Einzeldarstellungen* (Bern: Francke Verlag, 1973), p. 528.
16. Page, *Discarding Images*, p. 10.
17. Boethius, *Fundamentals*, p. 51.
18. Bruce Holsinger, citing Page among others, has since taken up the issue of medieval musical enjoyment in *Music, Body and Desire in Medieval Culture*:

- Hildegard of Bingen to Chaucer* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2001).
19. Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. R. S. Pine-Coffin (London: Penguin, 1961), p. 238.
20. D. W. Robertson, Jnr, *Preface to Chaucer: Studies in Medieval Perspectives* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1969), p. 23.
21. Robertson, *Preface*, 51.
22. Robertson, *Preface*, 51.
23. 'Authenticity' is a bygone term in this context. Nowadays music historians prefer to use less contentious terms like HIP (historically informed performance) but the impulse survives.
24. N. Wilson *The Art of Re-Enchantment: Making Early Music in the Modern Age* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), p. x.
25. Wilson, *Re-Enchantment*, p. 170.
26. Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (New York: Basic Books, 2001), p. 41.
27. Richard Taruskin, *Text and Act: Essays on Music and Performance* (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 149.
28. Christopher Page, 'The English "a cappella" Renaissance', *Early Music* 21.3 (Aug. 1993), p. 469.
29. Page, 'Renaissance', pp. 466–467.
30. Donald Grieg, 'Notes on "a cappella" Performance Practice', *Early Music* 23.1 (Feb. 1995), pp. 125–148.
31. Christopher Page, 'The Performance of ars antiqua Motets', *Early Music* 16. 2 (1988), pp. 147–164, p. 159.
32. Page, 'Performance', p. 159.
33. Page, 'Performance', p. 159.
34. 'Ther is no rose' is recorded in the 'Trinity Roll', *Cambridge, Trinity College, MS* 0.3.58, modern transcriptions with full text in Hugh Keyte and Andrew Parrott (eds.), *The New Oxford Book of Carols* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), pp. 82–83 and in *Musica Britannica* v. IV, *Mediaeval Carols*, ed. John Stevens, 2nd rev. edn. (London: Stainer and Bell, 1970), pp. 10–11. The middle line in each edition is added by the editors on the basis of a hypothesised fifteenth-century improvisation (83).
35. Gothic Voices, 'The Service of Venus and Mars': www.hyperion-records.co.uk/dc.asp?dc=D_GAW21238&vw=dc.
36. Gothic Voices Website: www.rayfieldallied.com/artists/gothic-voices/.
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38. See, for instance, track 16, the triumphalist 'Agincourt carol'.
39. John Milsom's 2004 review of the book in *Early Music* 32.3, p. 467.
40. Peter Phillips, *What We Really Do: The Tallis Scholars*, 2nd edn. (Musical Times, 2013), p. 13.
41. Chanticleer: www.youtube.com/watch?v=x67ewYepN3g The English Hilliard ensemble offers a similarly well-mannered but more up-tempo performance: www.youtube.com/watch?v=7Y3DBbJ4wok.
42. Mediaeval Baebes: www.youtube.com/watch?v=AqRdl51qBoc.
43. Bessman, Jim. 'Virgin's Baebes Get Mediaeval in U.S.' *Billboard*, v. 110.32 (Aug. 8, 1998), p. 12.

44. Amazon.com customer reviews. J. F. Henken: www.amazon.com/The-Rose-Mediaeval-Baebes/product-reviews/B000063138?pageNumber=3.
45. Amazon.com customer reviews: Bronwen: www.amazon.com/The-Rose-Mediaeval-Baebes/product-reviews/B000063138.
46. 'Burzum' is a Tolkien borrowing meaning 'darkness' in the language of Morder. Grishnakh is an orc character in Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings*.
47. Vikernes, Burzum website, Burzum story, I: www.burzum.org/eng/library/a_burzum_story01.shtml.
48. Vikernes, Burzum story, I: www.burzum.org/eng/library/a_burzum_story01.shtml.
49. Vikernes, Burzum story, I: www.burzum.org/eng/library/a_burzum_story01.shtml.
50. J. R. R. Tolkien, *The Silmarillion*, ed. Christopher Tolkien, 2nd edn. (New York: Del Rey, 2002), p. 6.
51. Plotinus, in Godwin, *Music*, 20.
52. Allmusic.com: www.allmusic.com/artist/burzum-mn0000645956.
53. 'Until the Light Takes Us', dir. Aaron Aites and Audrey Ewell, USA, 2009. www.youtube.com/watch?v=oD3lmAMDIX8.
54. www.burzum.com/burzum/library/interviews/varg/.
55. A Burzum Story Part 1, the origin and meaning: www.burzum.org/eng/library/a_burzum_story01.shtml.
56. www.youtube.com/watch?v=9Dw6cZPW5x8&list=UURIEbch1BKf1LWV2socXnuQ&index=4.
57. Goodrick-Clarke, Nicholas. *Black Sun: Aryan Cults, Esoteric Nazism and the Politics of Identity* (New York: New York University Press, 2001), p. 204.
58. Jones has collected a number of photographs to illustrate this point: www.huffingtonpost.ca/danko-jones/burzum-racist-heavy-metal_b_4266735.html.

Participatory medievalism, role-playing, and digital gaming

Carolyn Dinshaw's recent study *How Soon is Now? Medieval Texts, Amateur Readers, and the Queerness of Time* opens with Dinshaw's recollection of a 'defining moment' in the composition of the text at the New York Medieval Festival at the Cloisters in the fall of 2008.¹ Amidst the 'extravagant and fabulous' costumes of the revellers, Dinshaw spotted a young man wearing a blue terrycloth bathrobe, walking alone and playing a recorder.² Noticing that the garb was 'haphazard' and 'mundane', Dinshaw also notes that 'he must really have wanted to go to the festival that day, so that even in the absence of a costume he did his best and left the house in this makeshift garb'. Even so, the robe and recorder are marks of the medieval, and in throwing on the bathrobe the young man 'simultaneously drew together past (medieval style of robe), present (what was in his closet that day), and future (the goal of attending the festival in the park)',³ a kind of 'temporal heterogeneity' that likewise characterises the Cloisters itself in its architectural diversity.⁴ In Dinshaw's words, the young man was 'seeking pleasure', and 'Among the artisans and players that day at the fair was pulsing a love of knowledge', a love of the medieval as 'amateur medievalism'⁵ that recreates a simulacra of the medieval in the contemporary present.

The love of the medieval as remediated by amateur role-players and gamers is everywhere evident in the time and attention they devote to their characters and to their games in festivals and basements across the globe. In this chapter I turn to what I term 'participatory medievalism' and the forms of role-playing that characterise it, beginning with the tabletop role-playing game *Dungeons & Dragons*, moving to the Society for Creative Anachronism and Medieval/Renaissance Faires, then to LARPing (Live-Action Role-Playing), and finally to medievalist digital gaming. Drawing upon the scholarship of role-playing and the amateur's love of all things medieval, I approach through these four case studies some of the most popular forms of participatory medievalism before turning to digital gaming.

While relatively recent as a form of medievalism, digital gaming is reaching a new level of maturity with compelling storylines, complex elements of interactivity, and beautifully rendered graphics. As McKenzie Wark writes in *Gamer Theory*, ‘Games are not representations of this world. They are more like allegories of a world made over as gamespace. They encode the abstract principles upon which decisions about the realness of this or that world are now decided’ (para. 20). Accordingly, medievalist role-playing games and forms of ‘participatory medievalism’ rarely attempt to reach back to a ‘real’ Middle Ages and instead traffic through other forms of medievalism to create simulacra of medieval periods that never existed but yet are now within the purview of role-playing and the game: the neomedieval. This focus on representational and media forms distinguishes this use of the term ‘neomedieval’ from its usage in international relations as described in Bruce Holsinger’s chapter in this volume.

Magic circles, frames of reference, and role-playing

By ‘participatory medievalism’, which is closely allied to Tison Pugh and Angela Jane Weisl’s notion of ‘experiential medievalism’,⁶ I have in mind a spectrum of active, embodied encounter that carries participants into created medieval worlds with differing degrees of immersion, yielding the sense of participating in, and even inhabiting, a neomedieval fictional world.⁷ The forms of participatory medievalism share a common denominator in role-playing. The key to participatory medievalism and this sense of immersion is found in the notion of role-playing, of stepping inside the ‘magic circle’ of play. Johan Huizinga’s concept of the ‘magic circle’ from his landmark 1938 study, *Homo Ludens*, defines ‘game’ and its associated notion, ‘play’. The magic circle separates the game world – the fantasy world, the world of play – from the outside world or ‘real’ life, for, according to Huizinga, ‘play is a voluntary activity or occupation executed within certain fixed limits of time and place, according to rules freely accepted but absolutely binding, having its aim in itself and accompanied by a feeling of tension, joy, and consciousness that it is “different” from “ordinary life”’.⁸ Although Huizinga’s concept of the magic circle is not without its problems, participatory medievalism reveals this sense of being cordoned off from ‘real’ life to participate in serious role-playing that is governed by rules and accompanied by pleasure, the love of the amateur medievalist for role-playing and for the game.

Simultaneously, participatory medievalism finds the magic circle to be a porous membrane rather than a fixed boundary. The character’s experience can leak back into real life, or as Ethan Gilsdorf, a *Dungeons & Dragons* player, writes, ‘I . . . learned to be confident and decisive, and to feel powerful.

Even feel cocky. Some of the guts and nerve I role-played began to leak into the real world. By the time I graduated high school, I had transformed.⁹ Role-players thus ‘imagine-in’ to the shared fiction they create and ‘imagine out’ to the social world.¹⁰ In his classic study, *Shared Fantasy: Role Playing Games as Social Worlds*, Gary Alan Fine breaks Huizinga’s magic circle into nested frames of reference and character interaction – that is, social worlds as generators of meaning – in light of the experience of role-playing games. Drawing upon Erving Goffman’s idea of frame analysis, the ‘primary framework’ consists of life outside the game, ‘real’ life, which is not subject to the rules governing the role-play and is congruent to the world outside the game. The secondary framework is occupied by the player, who understands and manoeuvres within the game’s rules and restrictions. The tertiary framework is that of the character whose role is being played and who occupies the gamespace, for the ‘*character* identity is separate from the *player* identity’.¹¹ Within this tertiary gamespace, Fine identifies different forms of player–character interaction or simultaneous ‘awareness contexts’ as well as the role-player’s movement between frames of reference.¹² The first ‘awareness context’ distinguishes ‘the character’s legitimate knowledge from his animator’s knowledge of a more technologically advanced age’.¹³ The second indicates that ‘the characters must pretend not to know something that the players know’.¹⁴ The third ‘must assume the details of existence within the worlds that the characters occupy’.¹⁵ Thus, in role-playing, the ‘task of self-presentation does not merely involve manifesting an appropriate and coherent identity, but also involves concealing those other identities that are either incompatible or differently keyed’.¹⁶ Role-players often switch frames of reference and move deftly between the ‘real’ world and the game world or role-play, carrying the experience between realms. Many times, the concentrated development of a role-playing persona in a neomedieval fantasy world takes the player into in-depth research on the historical period, the technologies obtainable, and the social roles available – or it might be as simple as wearing a bathrobe and playing a recorder.

Role-playing is a common form of activity for children, who take on different guises in imaginary worlds as part of their social, and even individual, play – the world of ‘make believe’ in which the child maintains agency within the magic circle and protective frame of the game. This childhood activity finds expression in the yearning of many role-players to return to ‘a simpler time’ like the recreated Middle Ages. Such medievalism sees the medieval period as the childlike predecessor of the modern period, with its disenchantments, ambiguities, and complications. Thus, returning to the Middle Ages, even a simulacra of the medieval, is an attempt to re-enchant history with the nostalgia for a lost origin, a stable

and nurturing community, immersed in the simulacra of the never-real past, like wearing a well-worn robe on a sunny summer day. The Middle Ages thus function paradoxically for the role-player in that they provide both a unified point of stability and a source of infinite variety, simultaneously becoming a place of conservative, traditional values but individualised, transgressive possibilities. Participatory medievalism and role-playing falls across a spectrum of immersive neomedieval fantasy worlds, and *Dungeons & Dragons*, Medieval / Renaissance faires, the Society for Creative Anachronism and Live-Action Role-Players (LARPs) illustrate the range of these embodied, participatory neomedievalisms.

Participatory medievalism and role-playing across genres

In *Dungeons & Dragons*, the tabletop fantasy role-playing game, a Dungeon Master (DM) creates the adventuring scenario (or adopts a predesigned scenario or 'module'), interprets the rules of that setting, and adjudicates the action between party members and the party and its environment – the 'dungeon' in which the action occurs. Multiple adventures can be linked to create a 'campaign', and campaigns might last weeks or months. The adventuring party is made up of Player Characters (PCs) who create (or 'roll') their individual character's Strength, Constitution, Dexterity, Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma attributes, features that govern the character's interactions and add to the adventuring party's combined strengths. A roll of the dice randomly assigns the strength of each of the character attributes. The player also chooses other aspects of the character, including race, occupation, alignment (moral status), and other qualities. PCs and DMs play the game in character, and many encounters in the dungeon are settled with the roll of one of *Dungeons & Dragons*' famous dice – from four sided (d4) to twenty sided (d20). Players keep track of their character's attributes with a 'character sheet', the DM lays out the fantasy world on graph paper, and the players often use figurines on the tabletop map to measure their character's progress through the dungeon. The DM also interprets the rules of the game over the course of the campaign, the actions of Non-Player Characters (NPCs) with which the adventuring party interacts, and the battles, magic use, and other dealings in the dungeon. A character can perform any action s/he can imagine, as long as it fits within the scenario outlined by the DM. For example, players describe their characters' actions in the dungeon in character, the DM describes the outcome, and the character earns 'experience points' (or XP) based upon the outcome. When enough XP has been earned, the character gains a 'level' or higher rank of attainment that comes with increased powers. *Dungeons & Dragons* is also known for the detailed guidebooks that present

dungeon scenarios or the statistics of monsters, treasure, and artefacts. In its fourth major iteration, *Dungeons & Dragons* is now an online Role-Playing Game (RPG) as well. The great appeal of *Dungeons & Dragons* is its intensely social experience that exercises the imagination and creates a fellowship of amateur neomedievalists who negotiate a high fantasy world together. The neomedieval world of *Dungeons & Dragons* allows players to enter a medievalised high-fantasy world where gender, race, ethnicity, and sexuality are all malleable and negotiable, and in the same way the world of *Dungeons & Dragons* is created from the shards of recognisable neomedieval worlds like Tolkien's Middle Earth, so too player-characters adopt traits derived from epic quests, medieval romance, sword-and-sorcery fantasy, mystical religion, and chivalric stereotypes. The basic quest motif contains within itself a multitude of possibilities, and the simultaneously fragmented and stable medieval world provides a limitless supply of cultural referents.

Medieval and Renaissance 'fares' offer another form of participatory medievalism in which paying festival goers mingle with role-playing characters who enact different aspects of 'old tyme' life in a manufactured neomedieval setting. The nomenclature of these contemporary festivals varies between 'medieval' and 'Renaissance' in the same way the frontier between these historical periods is less a fixed structure than a porous frontier. Founded in California in the 1960s, according to Rachel Lee Rubin, the 'fares immediately established themselves as a pioneering and highly visible referendum on how we live now – our family arrangements, our relationship to consumer goods, and our corporate entertainments'.¹⁷ Medieval fares hearken back to a seemingly simpler historical moment, far removed from the social and political ambiguities that mark contemporary life, particularly in the cultural tumult of the 1960s. Small groups of like-minded folk create handmade goods, fashion self-made clothes, and adopt neomedieval personae that allow them to create new forms of sociality that exist palimpsestically within their current circumstances. Faire members, who think of themselves as family, dress in frocks, tunics, high boots, and other premodern styles, and incorporate their own version of 'olde English' that 'novelist Peter S. Beagle has affectionately dubbed "castle talk"'.¹⁸ – lots of 'thee', 'thou', 'ye', and 'huzzah!' The Three Barons Renaissance Faire in Anchorage, Alaska, highlights some of the characteristics of a typical premodern faire. Held during the first 2 weekends of June, thus taking advantage of the proximity to midsummer, the fair is set in the imaginary neomedieval world of 'Hillshire', a plot of land that during the winter serves as a dog mushing track. The faire and its activities are organised around three noble 'courts'. The Red Baron's court re-enacts a Renaissance Florentine household and staff; the Blue Baron's court is modelled upon late-medieval

Al-Andalus; and the Green Baron represents the court of baron Victor Steele and baroness Rayna Terra Steele, both aggressive militarists. The courts are supplemented in the neomedieval fantasy realm by a dozen guilds like the Wild Rovers, who portray a group of gypsies; the Alchemists Guild, who represent merchants and magicians; the Crooked Toad Tavern Show, a troupe of pirates in the adults-only beer garden; and, of course, the Wenches Guild, whose members are ‘fun and flirty’ but who will not allow themselves to be denigrated.¹⁹ Throughout Hillshire, amidst the courts and guilds, reside a host of vendors who sell everything from gyros and fried turkey legs – another mark of the medieval – to fairy wings and foam swords. As commentary on ‘how we live now’, the Anchorage Three Barons Faire creates out of the wide sweep of medieval history a community that otherwise never existed, comprised of members more diverse than many a medieval village. The appeal of the neomedieval fantasy world and the draw of role-playing unites a diverse population in ways that might not otherwise be possible in contemporary culture: rich or poor, young or old, straight or queer, native or non-native, jock or geek, male or female, slim or chunky, all potentially have a place in the role-playing world of participatory medievalism. The fantasised medieval world becomes a place where new forms of sociality are possible, bringing together folk who might not otherwise have reason to socialise. The emphasis throughout is on cheeky good fun rather than historical accuracy, and the myriad of medieval and Renaissance physical markers, tropes, and faux premodern accents create an historical *mélange*, a synchronic splash of medieval signifiers.

Of the many ‘living history’ organisations or ‘historical re-enactors’ that have emerged in the last 50 years, perhaps the best known is the Society for Creative Anachronism (SCA). Founded amidst the counterculture in 1960s California (at the same time as the Medieval / Renaissance faires) and ‘dedicated to researching and re-creating the arts and skills of pre-17th century Europe’, the SCA ‘is a postmodern construction of a Hollywood version of a Victorian image of a romantic Middle Ages that never actually existed’.²⁰ Formed in the turbulence of the 1960s, the SCA models the heroic, chivalric ideals of premodern Europe in its social structure, ritual re-enactments, personal role-playing, and creation of material culture. On the one hand, the SCA’s countercultural origin allies it with a progressive political agenda and a Ruskinian critique of industrial society. On the other, the SCA’s adoption of conventional gender roles and traditional hierarchies marks it as more conservative. The SCA’s ‘Known World’ is divided into nineteen kingdoms with over thirty thousand registered members from around the globe.²¹ The nineteen kingdoms (governed by a king and queen) are themselves subdivided in semi-feudal style by principality (ruled by a prince and

princess), barony (overseen by a baron and baroness), or province, and local branches are composed of shires, cantons, ridings, colleges, strongholds, or ports, all of which have membership and reporting requirements.²² Anchorage, Alaska, for example, is found in the Barony of Eskalya, in the Principality of Oertha, which is part of the Kingdom of the West. In addition to royalty, who are chosen in trial-by-combat, SCA branches model local officers on premodern exemplars like the seneschal (the chief administrative officer), the early marshal (who oversees all martial activities), the minister of arts and sciences (who supports the investigation of premodern art and technology), the chancellor of the exchequer (the treasurer), the chronicler (who oversees publications), and the surgeon (who administers first aid).²³ Thus, the role-playing extends beyond the individual re-enactor to include a social and political hierarchy modelled after the Middle Ages. Even so, the SCA is motivated by nostalgia, grasping after a simpler time and embracing a pre-industrial society seemingly devoid of rampant present-day social change.

The SCA is perhaps best known for the role-playing its members engage in to create their personae and for the combat many personae participate in to advance in the SCA hierarchy. Members create pre-seventeenth-century dresses appropriate to their chosen character and often create elaborate backstories for their personae, and local chapters host a variety of events throughout the year where members demonstrate crafts like forging and jewellery making, costuming and calligraphy, and spinning and embroidery. In this role-playing mash-up of postmodern pastiche and historical diversity, the amateur's love for the Middle Ages is everywhere present in the SCA. As Melissa Wobig / 'Isabella Beatrice della Rosa', an SCA devotee says, "I love seeing how people can really get into their character and become someone from the Middle Ages." "They just don't get to read about history. They get to do it."²⁴ Some in the SCA, perhaps even more commonly than any other form of participatory medievalism, become interested enough in their characters actually to research the historical, archaeological, and material conditions upon which their character is based, leading, for example, to spinning their own fabric, researching historically accurate stitching patterns, and using period tools to craft their outfits, domestic items and trade goods. Part and parcel of the creation of an effective costume for many SCA participants is the fashioning of armour. Combat in the SCA is strictly regulated by the Rules of the List and are supervised by the Earl Marshall of the Kingdom.²⁵ Kingdoms meet for yearly battles attended by thousands, as in the annual Pennsic War between the Kingdom of the East and the Middle Kingdom. Members fashion their own weapons and elaborate armour – swords are of rattan wrapped by duct tape, and armour can be

leather, chain, or plate mail – endeavouring to remain authentic to a specific historical era, and members meet in regulated pitched combat:

‘There aren’t a lot of opportunities in life to strap on 30 to 70 pounds of armor, put 20 pounds of aluminum on your arm and charge at a group of people as hard as you can without getting arrested’, said Ned Keitt-Pride, 37, a software developer whose alter ego is Torkil Gunnarsen, an eighth-century Danish Viking. . . . ‘The cannon sounds and people start charging’, he said. ‘This is the coolest thing I could think of doing. I grew up with [J.R.R.] Tolkien novels, with these kinds of battles.’²⁶

The warriors who receive the hit determine if it is a ‘worthy strike’, and if so, refrain from using that limb, while a killing blow must be rendered accurately and tellingly, delivered with sufficient force and technique.²⁷ After a killing blow, the fighter falls, pretending to be dead and is out for the rest of the melee. Martial interactions are thus based on a chivalric code in which combatants determine their own level of injury and remain friendly even after a battle. Within this fantasised neomedieval heterotopia, the SCA’s violence is controlled, policed, and harnessed to provide a social good (practising the arts of combat like a medieval knight) and to determine a political outcome (victorious fighters rise in ranks of the SCA hierarchy). Although women also participate in combat, the controlled violence that is so much a part of the SCA ethos provides a nostalgic, heroic model of masculinity, much like competitive modern sports. Unlike many aspects of contemporary masculinity in which social expectations are unclear, shifting, or unattainable, the thudding blow of sword upon helm broaches little ambiguity. Seeking community within a fragmented contemporary culture, the SCA is a transhistorical heterotopia bringing together scraps of multiple premodern cultures into a coherent whole based upon medieval precedents. To the temporal, spatial, and linguistic *translatio* described by Candace Barrington in her chapter on Global Medievalism we might add the material, in which the physical objects and technological practices of the premodern past (armour and fabric) are converted by these role-playing re-enactors into the neomedieval present.

While the SCA strives for some form of historical authenticity, LARPers engage in face-to-face fantasy role-playing that may only remotely resemble historical models. Arising from the same milieu that gave birth to *Dungeons & Dragons* and premodern faires, LARPing combines role-playing with ‘cosplay’ (costume play), ‘a hobby and subculture in which participants carefully replicate the outfit of a figure from anime or popular culture and wear that outfit to conventions’.²⁸ Lasting hours or even days, LARPs may be organised around any historical or fantasy realm, like sci-fi or steampunk worlds, but many of the most popular incorporate the characters of neomedieval high fantasy

(wizards, elves, knights, and other fantasy denizens) in *Dungeons & Dragons*-like scenarios. LARPs may take place in a natural setting, like an SCA gathering, or they may occur within the confines of a theatre space or historic building. LARPs may be loosely organised, resembling improvisational acting without a script, or more highly structured, governed by agreed-upon narratives, referees, and game mechanics that determine characters' interactions with one another.²⁹ For example, a LARPer playing a mage might cast a spell on another character by using a bean bag, or their battle might be determined by using rock-paper-scissors or by comparing their character 'stats' or statistics placed on a placard worn around their necks. In the Nordic world, where LARPing is considered an art form and sometimes engages difficult scenarios like military occupation or mental illness, LARPs are often improvisational performance pieces, much less structured and more personal, combining LARPing with scholarly productivity in the annual Knutepunkt convention.³⁰ LARPs also employ referees or 'game masters' (GMs, as in *Dungeons & Dragons*) who keep track of the action and Non-Playing Characters (NPCs) who give the LARPers tasks and maintain the fantasy environment. Some LARPs are pre-packaged worlds governed by extensive rules, often documented in manuals, into which players enter and exit, like NeroLarp, a Tolkienesque world with 50 chapters nationwide.³¹ Archaea is a sword-and-sorcery realm with its own map and mythos,³² Darkon 'is a full-contact medieval fantasy wargaming group',³³ and LARPs have been based upon the Harry Potter books and the sci-fi film *Avatar*. While the LARP takes place within the 'magic circle' of the fantasy world, many LARPers see little if any separation between their LARPing activities and their 'real' lives, each bleeding into the other more than the other forms or neomedievalist role-playing.³⁴ Each form of role-playing – from *Dungeons & Dragons* to the SCA and LARPing – embody and enact the multiply-layered medievalist temporality that Stephanie Trigg outlines in her chapter in this volume on 'Medievalism and Theories of Temporality'.

Participatory neomedievalism and digital gaming

Gamers immerse themselves in digital medieval worlds in much the same way that role-players enter the fantasy world's magic circle. Yet the neomedievalism invoked in digital gaming can be subtle, as in the *Gabriel Knight* game series that 'reinterpreted the Grail legend and revived the figure of the Arthurian knight in the guise of its unlikely hero',³⁵ or it can be overt in the high fantasy mode, as in *World of Warcraft*. Medieval epic and romance present the social structure and much of the material and technological

culture of high fantasy, and many medieval games are structured episodically like medieval romance. The goal throughout is to create an immersive digital environment in which the player feels psychologically and somatically connected to the electronic world. In gaming, Gordon Calleja distinguishes between *immersion as absorption*, in which the real world falls away as sensory engagement in the activity increases, and *immersion as transportation*, in which players assimilate the fictional world ‘as a metaphorically habitable environment’.³⁶ The contemporary neomedieval, mediating the Middle Ages through multiple cultural forms, provides enough familiarity to be comfortable and understandable and furnishes enough otherness to be strange and exotic. Working in gaming theory, Calleja’s ultimate descriptor is *incorporation*: ‘the player incorporates (in the sense of internalizing or assimilating) the game environment into consciousness while *simultaneously* being incorporated through the avatar into that environment’.³⁷ Some of the most popular medievalist games include RPGs (Role-Playing Games) and MMORPGs (Massively Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Games), but also include strategy games (Real-Time and Turn-Based Strategy Games (RTSs and TBSs)) as well as action–adventure games.

RPGs allow the player to take on a digital persona, or avatar, and to guide the avatar through the digital realm, seeking adventure, exploring the environment, battling monsters, gaining loot, and increasing XP. As in *Dungeons & Dragons*, when enough XP has been gained, the avatar ‘levels up’ and adds additional skills and powers. For example, in Lionhead Studios’ *Fable* series (2004–2010), set in the neomedievalist world of Albion, the player’s avatar is a youth known as the Hero of Oakvale, and the player guides the avatar, shown in third-person perspective, from youth to maturity as he completes quests to advance the game’s plot. The boy’s family is killed but the boy is rescued by Maze, a heroic figure who trains the boy so that he can seek those who killed his family and either spare or destroy them. This feature, sparing or killing enemies, points to one of *Fable*’s unique features, ‘alignment’: the avatar’s physical features change depending upon his actions. Good actions lead to lighter complexion and a halo above his head while negative actions lead to a darker complexion, red eyes, and a fiery halo at his feet. *Fable* carries this main plotline but also branches into optional quests that the player may take, all of which lead to increasing skills in battle and use of magic. Other neomedievalist or high-fantasy series in this mode include game series like *Dungeon Siege*, *Might and Magic*, and *The Elder Scrolls*.

MMORPGs differ from RPGs in that they take place online, allow simultaneous play for thousands, if not millions, of players, and occur in a persistent universe; that is, the game world continues to evolve digitally even when the player is signed out of the realm. Whereas most RPGs require

the player to adopt an avatar but allow limited customisation, many MMORPGs allow a wide range of character choice and personalisation. For example, the hugely popular *World of Warcraft* divides the world into two factions who are perpetually at war (the Alliance and the Horde), and five different races are available for each faction. Within the races, the player may choose one of six specific classes of character, and each character can also specialise in several of more than a dozen professions. If this level of customisation weren't enough, *World of Warcraft* players also carry specific skills and reputations, and each avatar's look is unique due to the armour s/he wears and the weapons s/he wields. As a result, *World of Warcraft* boasts a nearly unlimited number of unique avatars to roam its expansive environments. Gender-bending is also common in neomedieval RPGs and MMORPGs, with male characters developing female avatars and vice versa. As an MMORPG, *World of Warcraft* not only encourages social play (that is, allying with other players in 'guilds'), it requires alliance to take on the most difficult challenges in the game: 'quest chains' of up to forty allied players who take on the most difficult 'bosses' or high-level monsters in the battle. MMORPGs also often provide online methods of interaction, like in-game chat channels, to strengthen the social ties among players. Other MMORPGs in a neomedievalist vein include *Everquest*, *Ultima Online*, and *Dark Age of Camelot*.

While RPGs and MMORPGs demand strategic attention to things like character 'stats' ('statistics' for health, weapon damage, and magic use that indicate an avatar's overall strength), strategy games require a player to manage large armies or even whole civilisations, rather than individual characters, in combat with one another. Strategy games fall into two basic types: Turn-Based Strategy (TBS) and Real-Time Strategy (RTS) both of which require the player to balance the acquisition of resources with building an army and fostering a civilisation. The TBS series *Civilization* allows a player to guide an entire culture from prehistory forward, through a putatively medieval period, while battling other civilisations for supremacy on a turn-by-turn basis. The RTS series *Age of Empires* has a fully medieval manifestation in *Age of Empires II: Age of Kings*, and players can take control of one of thirteen different medieval civilisations in a race to vanquish all enemies in real time, rather than taking turns against the game's Artificial Intelligence (AI). *Medieval: Total War* combines elements of both, requiring turn-based strategy and real-time tactics as the player commands one of fourteen playable factions against historically based foes in a game set between 1087 and 1453 and stretched across Europe, North Africa, and the Middle East. Other neomedievalist strategy games include the *Stronghold* and *Crusader Kings* series.

A final gaming genre that engages simulated forms of the medieval is the action-adventure game in which the player controls an avatar, and some of the most popular are derived from medieval literature. *Beowulf: The Game* borrows from the Anglo-Saxon epic to chart a hack-and-slash path through the narrative as Beowulf and his thanes fight Grendel, Grendel's mother, and the dragon, all while the player allocates Heroic or Carnal points to increase Beowulf's strength. *Dante's Inferno* is inspired by the *Commedia*, but rather than engendering a contemplative protagonist, the game fashions Dante as a marauding crusader knight who must rescue Beatrice from Lucifer's power after battling his way through the nine rings of hell. At each step as Dante defeats a hellish enemy, he is given the power to punish or absolve his foes. *Assassin's Creed's* protagonist Desmond Miles inhabits the consciousness of Altair ibn-La'Ahad, an assassin during the Third Crusade, as he gallivants around the Near East in battle against the machinations of the Knights Templar, who persist in the guise of the Abstergo corporation. *Prince of Persia: The Sands of Time*, set in a recognisable medieval Near East, presents the parkour-running Prince, son of the Persian king, battling against an evil Vizier with his Dagger of Time, which slows down time and even reverses gameplay so that the player can take a different route through the action.

This survey of neomedievalist digital gaming offers just a snapshot of the depth and richness of their settings, character choices, game mechanics, narrative breadth, iconographic complexity, and environmental richness, all of which ask gamers to take on neomedieval avatars, to continue the quest, and to conquer these immersive games. Participatory neomedievalisms, whether table-top, digital, or face-to-face, make time queer, as Tison Pugh demonstrates in 'Queer Medievalisms', rendering temporality itself malleable and infinitely replayable.

Participatory neomedievalism as affinity spaces

The spectrum of participatory neomedievalisms covered in this chapter are but a small slice of contemporary fascination with the recreated Middle Ages and can be seen as examples of what James Paul Gee calls 'affinity spaces', where 'people relate to each other primarily in terms of common interests, endeavours, goals or practices, not primarily in terms of race, gender, age, disability or social class'.³⁸ In affinity spaces like those of participatory neomedievalism, 'newbies' or 'noobs' are as readily accepted as masters or experienced role-players, and different forms of knowledge are nurtured, explored, and exchanged as social relationships are renegotiated: intensive as well as extensive knowledge is traded, individual as well as distributed knowledges coexist and are connected, disbursed knowledges outside the

affinity space are incorporated, and tacit knowledge – that derived from practice though not fully articulated – is honoured. Participating in these forms of neomedieval simulacra, medieval role-players demonstrate a trans-temporal affinity to a Middle Ages that is somehow like our own and to medieval people who are somehow like us – and yet different. Affinity spaces occur in and across multiple media as expressions of what Henry Jenkins has termed ‘convergence culture’³⁹: SCA members and LARPerS are likewise gamers; medieval role-players contribute to websites and write fan fiction; gamers take on medieval re-enactments, cosplay, and role-playing and meet other gamers at ‘cons’ or conventions to celebrate their favourite games and characters. We might extend Jenkins’s concept in a transmedial neomedievalist direction to say that ‘convergence’ is also what participatory neomedievalism trades in, as indicated by Dinshaw’s berobed recorder player: the simultaneous convergence of the tropes of the past in the press of the present with a view towards an emergent future, all without an anxious reaching towards an authentic past. All it takes is a bathrobe and desire. The recorder is optional.

NOTES

1. Carolyn Dinshaw, *How Soon is Now? Medieval Texts, Amateur Readers and the Queerness of Time* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012), p. ix.
2. *Ibid.*, p. ix.
3. *Ibid.*, p. x.
4. *Ibid.*, p. xii.
5. *Ibid.*, p. xii.
6. ‘Through experiences both mediated (such as videogames) and immediate (such as jousting and medieval fairs), experiential medievalisms foreground the possibility of becoming, if not being, medieval, of reliving the Middle Ages in its necessarily modern reinventions.’ See Tison Pugh and Angela Jane Weisl, *Medievalisms: Making the Past in the Present* (New York: Routledge, 2013), p. 122.
7. See Gordon Calleja, *In-Game: From Immersion to Incorporation* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2011), pp. 17–34. I draw the notion of participation from Evan Torner and William J. White, ed., *Immersive Gameplay: Essays on Participatory Media and Role-Playing* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2012).
8. Huizinga, 28.
9. Ethan Gilsdorf, ‘How Dungeons & Dragons Changed My Life’, *Salon.com*, 8 March 2011. Accessed 18 December 2013: www.salon.com/2011/03/09/dungeons_and_dragons_comes_back/.
10. Todd Nicholas Fuist, ‘The Agentic Imagination: Tabletop Role-Playing Games as a Cultural Tool’, in Torner and White (eds.), *Immersive Gameplay*, Kindle location 1512.
11. Gary Alan Fine, *Shared Fantasy: Role Playing Games as Social Worlds* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), p. 186. Emphasis in Fine.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 187.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 189.

14. *Ibid.*, pp. 189–190.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 192.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 196.
17. Rachel Lee Rubin, *Well Met: Renaissance Faires and the American Counterculture* (New York: New York University Press, 2012), p. 6.
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23. *Organizational Handbook*, pp. 29–30. Accessed 3 December 2013: www.sca.org/docs/pdf/govdocs.pdf.
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26. Chris Martell, ‘Clad in Various Armor and Period Dress, Warriors Attack Full Strength and Decide Wins by Code of Honor,’ *Wisconsin State Journal*, 27 November 2011, p. G1.
27. *Ibid.*, p. G1.
28. Lizzie Stark, *Leaving Mundania: Inside the Transformative World of Live Action Role-Playing Games* (Chicago: Chicago Review Press, 2012), p. 174.
29. For example, see the dozens of scenarios, with accompanying documentation, at ‘LARP Scenarios’. Accessed 5 December 2013: wiki.rpg.net/index.php/LARP_Scenarios.
30. For a participant’s view of Knutepunkt, see Lizzie Stark, *Leaving Mundania: Inside the World of Live Action Role-Playing Games* (Chicago: Chicago Review Press, 2012), pp. 195–224.
31. ‘NERO: Live Action Role-Playing’. Accessed 5 December 2013: nerolarp.com.
32. ‘Welcome to the Archaea Live-Action Role-Playing and Wargaming Information Page’. Accessed 5 December 2013: www.archaea.org.
33. ‘The Darkon Wargaming Club’. Accessed 5 December 2013: www.darkon.org.
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36. Calleja, 27.
37. *Ibid.*, p. 169. Emphasis in Calleja.
38. James Paul Gee, ‘Semiotic Social Spaces and Affinity Spaces: From *The Age of Mythology* to Today’s Schools’, in D. Barton and K. Tusting (eds.), *Beyond Communities of Practice: Language, Power, and Social Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 225.
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6

MIKE RODMAN JONES

Early modern medievalism

The title of this chapter is inherently controversial. For medievalism of any kind to exist, the Middle Ages need to be over. That is, the very phrase ‘early modern medievalism’ begs the question of cultural periodisation, not only of how, and where, the Middle Ages end, but (at the same time) where one might locate the beginnings of ‘modernity’. A number of intersecting phenomena are usually imagined to support this most fundamental of epistemic or epochal shifts between the pre- and early modern in Western culture, which include the political, textual, linguistic, and religious. In England, the triumph of Henry VII at Bosworth Field in 1485, and the instigation of the Tudor monarchies that followed, might be held to be a dividing political line. Similarly, the beginnings of print in William Caxton’s Westminster print shop in the 1470s might be gestured towards, the beginning of the end of a scribal culture and a decisive shift towards the mass production of print technology. The associated – perhaps accidental and certainly gradual – standardisation of written English might be key to a philological approach to the question, as the written forms of Middle English increasingly lost their remaining inflection and the vast geographical differentiation of regional dialects solidified into the form associated with the South East, and London in particular. The Reformation is often seen to mark the segregating line in terms of religious culture, between the long tradition of western Latin Christendom and the distinctly modern world of fragmented national churches, each worshipping in its own vernacular and frequently at war with other such entities.

All these phenomena, however, have come under increasing levels of scrutiny over recent decades, as the gap between medieval and Early Modern periods, particularly in literary studies, has become a flash-point of interest and activity, even as the popular understanding of medieval and early modern culture (usually still termed ‘Renaissance’ in non-academic discourse) remains entrenched, and shaped partly by the tacit assumptions about secularism and individualism that characterise

some branches of early modern studies, particularly the study of Shakespeare.

It is perhaps the Reformation which has become the single-most discussed aspect of this important debate, largely because of responses to the work of the medievalist James Simpson, whose previous scholarship on John Gower and William Langland is now probably less cited than his volume in the 'Oxford English Literary History' series, *Reform and Cultural Revolution* (2002). This powerful study began by turning the standard narrative of the early modern (national religious liberation leading to greater democratisation and cultural freedom and achievement) on its head. The cultural movement from medieval to Reformation and modern culture, argued Simpson, was 'a narrative of diminishing liberties' in which forms of cultural centralisation acted to suppress the openness and gradual 'reformism' of medieval culture.¹ Necessarily for a volume which sees the Reformation in such a central role, Simpson's book begins with the Dissolution of the Monasteries (1536–1539) as the destructive starting point of this shift. The violent, 'revolutionary' (and indeed, in Simpson's later writing, 'fundamentalist') actions of the Reformation created the end of the Middle Ages.

This chapter accepts at least part of this conception of the Reformation's central importance for the relationship between 'medieval' and 'early modern' cultures. However, it also accentuates one of the paradoxical and unexpected products of this cultural moment. Early modern medievalism *was* produced by the Reformation. We need, however, to see that it existed in a kind of tension between destruction and generation, inspiration, and adaptation. The importance of medieval culture for the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries is perhaps even now not always recognised as the generative thing that it was. While accounts of literary medievalism frequently cite Edmund Spenser as the key medievalist figure in the period (see, for example, Chris Jones's and Clare Simmons's chapters in this volume) there also existed a wider spectrum of available responses to medieval culture.

The 'pastness' of the medieval often seems palpable in early modern writing, but that imagining of the past is strikingly productive, rather than moribund or old-fashioned. In William Shakespeare's sonnet 73, for example, the poet describes his old age, the 'time of year' which might be observed in him, with the startling image of denuded trees as '[b]are ruined choirs where late the sweet birds sang'.² This image is part of an artful sequence of metaphors for human age: as natural season, as arboreal image associated with that seasonal change, and that image described with the metaphor of 'ruined choirs' left behind by Henry VIII's (or Thomas Cromwell's) Reformation. While this only glances, perhaps, to an historical event, many editions of Shakespeare's *Sonnets* comment on the melancholy, nostalgic

aspect of the image, linking the poet's self-consciousness of ageing to the distant, ruined remains of the medieval past. Likewise, John Donne's second *Satire* uses the image of 'winds in oure ruined Abbeyes roar[ing]' to imagine the danger of noisome 'words' emanating from vicious juridical poets.³ In both cases, the ruined architectural victims of the Dissolution have become a striking image, historically resonant and yet detached from the ideological forces and actions that produced that history, ripe for use as figures of other things. Similarly, in the prologue to *The Two Noble Kinsmen* (1613), Shakespeare and John Fletcher gesture towards the origins of their narrative, Chaucer's 'Knight's Tale':

It has a noble breeder and a pure,
A learnèd, and a poet never went
More famous yet twixt Po and silver Trent.
Chaucer, of all admired, the story gives;
There constant to eternity it lives.
If we let fall the nobleness of this
And the first sound this child hear be a hiss,
How will it shake the bones of that good man,
And make him cry from under ground.⁴

This is one of a number of moments in which early modern playwrights deal with medieval poets and writers in their prologues. One could also point towards the figures of John Gower and Ranulph Higden, respectively, voicing the prologues of *Pericles* (1609) and Thomas Middleton's *Hengist* (c.1620). *The Two Noble Kinsmen*'s prologue situates a demonstrably early modern cultural form (a play performed by a professional theatre company in an age of custom-built professional theatres, something only possible after 1576), in relation to a medieval origin. As with many theatrical prologues, it strives to do a number of related things. Most importantly, it is both respectful and expedient, positioning the medieval poet as dead and buried, and yet as a kind of active, live defence (or threat) to the audience. Chaucer is noble, learned, morally upstanding and pure (presumably to reassure those who might have read some fabliaux recently and weren't sure), and famous. Like Ben Jonson's elegy for Shakespeare himself, Chaucer's text is also timeless, living 'constant to Eternity' as Shakespeare exists 'for all time'. The image that follows, however, won't leave Chaucer alone in his revered grave, but pre-empts audience reaction, and theatrical failure, by summoning Chaucer's voice from the ground in the event of a 'hiss' from the audience that the actor is facing. Helen Cooper has described how Shakespeare's Gower in *Pericles* 'represents, not just the continuing life of the medieval, but the invention of medievalism', but the prologue to

The Two Noble Kinsmen, too, is a perfect image in miniature for the medievalism of the Early Modern period.⁵ On the one hand, in its primary negotiation of time and poetic status, this is clearly ‘medievalist’ in the sense that antiquarianism is medievalist. However, this is also a moment in which that medieval icon is productive in an environment which Chaucer himself could not have foreseen. In this curious space between audience and actor that exists at the opening of an early modern play, Chaucer is used to insinuate a shared commitment and camaraderie between people who may well be complete strangers, and may well be potentially at odds. Chaucer is here precisely because no one, the prologue suggests, wants to shake his bones. If the audience hiss, the company has failed, but the audience shares the responsibility, too, for summoning up a subterranean voice that should be silent.

Dissolution, annexation, reclamation

The primary cause of medievalism in the period was surely the political and religious priorities that threatened to destroy much of the textual and material culture of the Middle Ages. In a shockingly efficient span of a few years in the latter 1530s, England’s medieval monastic culture was dissolved. The basis of this action was arguably financial: a huge exchange of land and income from ecclesiastical to monarchical ownership. However, the environment which enabled this action rested upon an anti-institutional historiography that was a hallmark of early Protestantism. The central institutional document of the English church, *The Book of Common Prayer* (first edition 1549, with numerous later amended editions), founded its own reform of devotional practice on the grounds that the ‘Godly and decent ordre of the auncient fathers, hath been so altered, broken, and neglected’ over the preceding centuries.⁶ Earlier, William Tyndale launched a sequence of vicious attacks on what he saw as the Roman negligence of this ‘decent ordre’ and argued that the Roman Catholic clergy had actively misrepresented that order for centuries in ‘the smoke of their bottomless pit’, ‘they will so darken the right way with the mist of their sophistry [...] their subtle riddles’; the clergy had worked to ‘darken’, ‘tangle’, ‘delude’, and ‘amaze’ the sense of scripture for the people.⁷ It is possible here to see two of the sharpest anti-medieval discourses of the period working in tandem. The anticlericalism of Tyndale’s writing powerfully creates a sense of the ‘dark’, indeed deliberately ‘darkened’ or mystified, ages: a span of time between the clarity of the apostolic period and reformed – and to continue Tyndale’s language, ‘enlightened’ – time. Simultaneously, Tyndale’s attacks on the ‘mist of their sophistry’ suggests the force of contemporary Humanist disdain

for medieval intellectual culture, a disdain usually focused on either medieval Latin style or Thomist scholasticism, or both.

Paradoxically, it was precisely this gathering of anti-medieval discourses around the Reformation that both enabled the Dissolution and what we might call the first post-medieval medievalism. Even the most vociferous critic of medieval Catholicism could balk in the face of the destructiveness of reform. John Bale was to lament, movingly, that the remains of the ‘lybrarye bokes’ found in dissolved religious houses were used by their new owners:

Some to serve theyr iakes, some to scoure theyr candel styckes, and some to rubbe their bootes. Some they solde to the grossers and the sope sellers, and some they sent over the sea to the bokebynders, not in small nombre, to the wonderynge of the foreyn nacyons.⁸

As Margaret Aston has written, though, ‘ruins may make historians’, and indeed it was the reformers themselves who instigated the first wave of antiquarianism that reclaimed some parts of medieval culture from a similar fate. While in some cultures and periods religious difference might prove to be a barrier to appreciation of medieval culture (see examples in the chapters by Lynch and Simmons in this volume), in Reformation England the drive to appropriate the medieval past often proved stronger than a sense of confessional alienation. This form of antiquarianism, a quest to recover the medieval past, frequently blurred the boundaries between recovery, reclamation, and annexation. Indeed, something significant is suggested by Bale’s horrified shame at the ‘wonderynge’ of ‘foreyn nacyons’. Across Europe, destructive and violent religious controversy enabled the recovery of what was most at risk. During the French Wars of Religion (1562–1598), for example, it was precisely the national past that enabled the recovery of medieval cultures, even as the wars themselves produced a demonstrable break with that past.⁹ Just so, the early- and mid-Tudor years in England produced a flourishing of antiquarianism which was driven by the need to shore up the fracturing of identity between national and ecclesiastical histories.

One striking act of reclamation and annexation took place even in the midst of the Dissolution, and continued during the sharply reformist mid-century. This concerned the movement of major Middle English poetry into the world of print. Chaucer’s poetry was already cemented in the canon of printed English poetry by the 1530s, however, in the midst of the Dissolution period, Chaucer’s reputation was shaped by the appearance of two works which today are no longer assigned to Chaucer’s pen: the *Plowman’s Tale* (c. 1532) and *Jack Upland* (c. 1536). These works foregrounded and expanded on the more delicate and diffuse anticlericalism of Chaucer’s

poetry. Scholarship surrounding these texts suggests that they might have been earlier Wycliffite texts, or even partially ‘new’ Reformation texts, but they certainly acted to shape Chaucer in a particular way. *The Plowman’s Tale*, a one-sided polemical debate in the mode of beast-fable and debate poem, pitted a Christ-like Pelican against a violently aggressive and persecutory Griffin, and made no bones about making the villain of the piece a Papal church. *Jack Upland* worked in a similar vein, using the figure of the plain, honest husbandman as a polemical voice against the machinations of the clergy, particularly the friars. Both of these texts had a considerable impact on the image of Chaucer which was mediated by the mid-Tudor period. Every edition of Chaucer’s works until the later eighteenth century included the *Plowman’s Tale* as part of the *Canterbury Tales*, and John Foxe’s 1570 edition of *Acts and Monuments* (discussed later) reprinted *Jack Upland* as part of its discussion of Chaucer. There was clearly a market for what now seems like a curious kind of canon-formation, in which medieval poetry could be reclaimed by reformism and offered as an authentic precedent for the anti-Catholic cultures of the sixteenth century. Another important example is that of the first printed editions of Langland’s fourteenth-century poem, *Piers Plowman*. Robert Crowley, a vociferous reformer for the best part of the century, was, among other things, a printer and publisher who produced a huge volume of medieval writing in the mid-century, including the first edition of Langland’s poem. As well as the demonstrable care and effort which went into the editions, of which there were three in 1550, Crowley introduced the poem to his mid-Tudor readers in the following terms:

In whose [Edward III’s] tyme it pleased God to open the eyes of many to se hys truth, geuing them boldenes of herte, to open their mouthes and crye oute agaynste the worckes of darckenes, as did John Wicklefe, who also in those dayes translated the holye Bible into the Englishe tonge, and this writer who in reportynge certaine visions and dreames [...] doeth moste christianlye enstruct the weake, and sharply rebuke the obstinate blynde.¹⁰

Crowley’s medievalism here is of a characteristic kind for the sixteenth century: it desires to celebrate and recover the medieval past, but is unavoidably involved in particular kinds of ideological work, most importantly a revisionist reclamation or annexation of certain aspects of the Middle Ages which coalesced with reformed culture.

An even more sharply controversial type of medievalism can be seen in the earliest sixteenth-century responses to earlier medieval culture, specifically the textual remains of Old English. A quick succession of printed texts which introduced readers to Old English appeared in the 1560s and 1570s, from what is seen as the first printed Old English in *The Testimonie of Antiquitie*

(1566), to an edition of the gospels in Old English (1571) and an edition of Asser's *Life of Alfred* (1574). These, as Sian Echard has argued, were the products of a conscious effort by a circle of scholars with Matthew Parker, then Archbishop of Canterbury, at its heart, to 'use Anglo-Saxon scholarship to solidify the doctrinal and institutional position of the Church of England'. This, as with the reception and printing of Chaucer and Langland, 'speaks to the Reformation's concern with authentic origins'.¹¹ It is worth remembering, though, that this form of medievalism was not exclusively reformist. Indeed, the recovery of early modern origins in the pre-conquest Middle Ages was almost simultaneously part of a transcontinental counter-Reformation effort to use medieval culture and precedent for precisely the opposite polemical ends. Thomas Stapleton, an English Catholic exile working in the Low Countries during Elizabeth I's reign, published a translation of Bede's *Ecclesiastical History of the English People* (1565) which spoke directly back to the activities of Matthew Parker and his English reformist scholars. In its preface, an epistle directed to Elizabeth, Stapleton offered his translation of Bede's history as of particular import for 'these perilous times of schisme and heresy', and one that he hoped might be of profit 'to the deceived consciences of my dere countremen'.¹² The text is prefaced with a long list of the 'differences' between the 'primitive faith' and the 'pretensed faith of protestants'. Just as Parker, Foxe, and others sought to root the post-Reformation church in the medieval past, Stapleton used Bede's history to argue

the pretended faith of protestants [is] but a bastard slippe proceeding of an other stocke (as partly of old renewed heresies, partly of new forged interpretations upon the written text of God's worde) and therefore not to be rooted in your graces dominions.

Stapleton's language here ('bastard', 'stock', 'rooted') is significant, as it demonstrates the urgency of this type of medievalism – an ideologically driven search for precedent, parentage, and authenticity which preferred, above all, the old or ancient, in a kind of race for annexation and reclamation in which the worst possible situation would be an absence of the medieval.

Another vital example of this discourse is one of the most influential texts of medievalism in the entire Early Modern period: Foxe's *Acts and Monuments* (1563, 1570, 1576, 1583). This huge tome was surely among the most vital formative texts of early Protestantism, but it is also one of the most fully-realised medievalist texts in the period, and one which had an immense influence on early modern literature, from ballad collections to Shakespearian drama. One example from Foxe's text may serve to demonstrate the remarkable intersection of medievalism, scholarship, and

ideological conflict which characterises this text. Like Crowley (who Foxe knew well, along with John Bale), Foxe sought to demonstrate how the medieval past could be reclaimed by the reformed present. For Foxe, medieval reformers were an important precedent for post-Lutheran Protestants.

One particular putative Lollard, Sir John Oldcastle, is worth mentioning here, as Foxe's dealings with Oldcastle go to the heart of the uncomfortable medievalism of the reformers. For Foxe, Oldcastle was a glorious martyr for the reformed cause, a perfect medieval precedent for the burnt martyrs of the 1550s. The 1563 edition of Foxe's text includes an astonishing woodcut illustration of Oldcastle's martyrdom in chains and flames which is even, perhaps, more visceral and dramatic than those which record the martyrdoms of later Lutherans. The problem for Foxe, as historians of the Lollard movement know well, was the involvement of Oldcastle in the eponymous rebellion of 1414 which cemented the relationship between heterodoxy and sedition, which was to remain a significant factor in religious history across the Reformation period. In his 1563 edition, Foxe writes, 'complaint was made unto the king of them [Oldcastle and his followers] that they had made a great assemble in S. Giles field at London, purposing the destruction of the land, and the subversion of the common wealthe', but when Henry V arrives at St. Giles' Field, 'he found no such company'.¹³ Instead, as the marginal commentary informs the reader, 'Yet was the complaint judged true, because the Byshops had spoken it at the information of their priestes.' Significantly, Foxe was required to return to the issue again in the 1570 edition in the face of counter-historiography from exiled counter-Reformation writers, including Nicholas Harpsfield (the biographer of Sir Thomas More), who maintained that the knight whom Foxe was attempting to represent as a proto-Protestant martyr was actually seditious. Clearly, these first forms of medievalism in the sixteenth century rested on controversial and unstable ground, and were shaped by powerful religio-political forces. They were attempts to read the past which constituted, in themselves, the nascent formation of a new, national-ecclesiastical identity which was vulnerable to counter-readings and contradiction. This was medievalism of a sharply ideological and necessarily polemical kind. As in other periods and other discourses (see especially Jones's and Simmons's chapters in this volume) nationhood and national identity were often important drivers in producing medievalism in literary, political, and religious terms.

Continuities, re-formations, and early modern literature and drama

The privileging of this Reformation medievalism, with its national narratives of ruins and parentage, can be problematic though, as it might lead

us to forget that this was only *one* aspect of the responses to medieval culture in the period. The violent combination of desire and antagonism that characterises Reformation discourse could force us to neglect the fact that medieval texts and cultures were vital sources of inspiration for a very rich period of literary production, the period which C. S. Lewis termed the ‘Golden Age’ of Elizabethan literature. The 1590s produced a huge swathe of medievalist literature, in the form of historical theatre, poetry, and prose fiction, much of which remains comparatively understudied even by early modernists. For many scholars, Holinshed’s *Chronicles* (1577, 1587) remains the starting point for study of this literature, but there are clearly broader and deeper continuities to be explored here. E. M. W. Tillyard’s seminal short study of the cultural context surrounding Shakespeare’s history plays suggested some of these continuities. *The Elizabethan World Picture* argued, for example, that some of Hamlet’s soliloquies which were frequently deemed to be archetypes of a ‘Renaissance Humanist’ world view were actually ‘in the purest medieval tradition’; that Protestantism itself could be seen as ‘a selection and a simplification of what was there all the time’; and that Shakespeare’s generation was ‘united in holding with earnestness, passion and assurance to the main outlines of the medieval world picture as modified by the Tudor regime, although they all knew that the coherence of this picture had been threatened’.¹⁴ Many scholars might hesitate over some of Tillyard’s claims here, but the fact that such a central figure in early modern scholarship was deeply sceptical about the division between medieval and Early Modern periods (and certainly about assumptions regarding the ‘secular’ consciousness of the Renaissance) is a useful thing to recall.

Following in Tillyard’s wake, though using more sophisticated categories, the work of Helen Cooper has consistently sought to draw out the powerful continuities between the worlds of Chaucer and Shakespeare. In *The English Romance in Time* (2004), Cooper adapted the term ‘meme’ to explore how the narrative motifs and structures of medieval romance continued to circulate in a wide variety of literary forms well into the writing of Spenser, Shakespeare, and their contemporaries. Her more recent work has focused on the shared dynamics of medieval and early modern theatrical performance, in the shared practice of ‘total theatre’ (another striking term), which allowed the stage to work against the restrictive decorum of Neo classical ideas about theatre. Her latest work suggests again (following Derek Brewer) that we view Shakespeare as a ‘medieval writer’, an idea which, as Cooper notes, ‘still has power to startle’.¹⁵ It seems significant here that by side-stepping the bullish controversy that centres on the

Reformation, Cooper is able to explore a more open space for other forms of medievalism, even as the dynamics of Reformation ruins and reclamation can rarely be entirely absent.

Another important aspect of this exploration of medievalism in terms of continuity or adaptation is the rise of interest in the mid-Tudor period. Until comparatively recently, the period before 1580 was frequently left out of narratives about early modern literary culture. Cathy Shrank's and Mike Pincombe's *Oxford Handbook of Tudor Literature, 1485–1603* is an important part of a counter-movement which sees the early- and mid-sixteenth century as significant in its own right. This is critical for the study of early modern medievalism, as the mid-Tudor period was central to what one might call the 'mediation' of the Middle Ages. It is worth remembering that alongside the antiquarian wrestling over the medieval past, this was a period in which medieval culture was decidedly in vogue and strongly appreciated, a time, noted Thomas Wilson in 1553, when 'the fine courtier will talk nothing but Chaucer'.¹⁶ This was also the period of the longest-lasting of medievalist forms: the many redactions of *The Mirror for Magistrates* (1559, 1563, 1574, 1578, 1587, 1610) and Foxe's *Acts and Monuments*. We find, then, that as well as the continuities we draw directly between medieval and Elizabethan literary culture, a vital aspect of early modern medievalism was the mediation and adaptation of medieval culture which took place in the half century between the Dissolution and the first professional playhouse.

It is also true that some forms of medievalism in the 1590s worked to form identities which were not necessarily dominated by the national or ecclesiastical priorities of Foxe or Parker. Historiography on medieval subjects had always harboured the potential to draw political parallels between the past and present which were less convenient to dominant narratives of national heritage and identity. Sir John Haywood's history of Henry IV (1599) was only one of a number of texts which suggested close and risqué parallels between Richard II and Elizabeth I. Elizabeth Cary's *Edward II* (1627, printed 1680) similarly described a monarch's reign in ways which suggested complex and highly politicised commentary on Stuart court politics (and indeed this was only one example of a trend for using medievalist work as a form of political commentary discussed in Jones's chapter in this volume). Moreover, a number of important writers of historiography, drama, and prose fiction in the period looked to the Middle Ages to develop what might be called a distinctly 'civic' form of medievalism and identity. The hub of this trend is John Stow's *Survey of London* (1598, 1603), which combined a detailed and emotive description of London with a dedicated medievalist antiquarianism. Stow even appended William Fitzstephen's twelfth-century description of the city to

his second edition of the *Survey*. However, Stow was hardly an isolated figure in this regard: many other writers working in different genres also sought to locate the origins and traditions of London civic identity in the medieval past. These writers produced a whole genre of narratives in which the medieval *civic* past comes to offer an important source of inspiration. Thomas Heywood and Thomas Deloney are two such writers. This form of ‘civic medievalism’ also worked to squeeze civic medievalism, sometimes uncomfortably, into the space often dominated by dynastic or ecclesiastical priorities. Heywood’s hugely popular 1 and 2 *Edward IV* (1599), for example, offered a narrative of the downfall of Jane Shore which can be found proliferating in the sixteenth century everywhere from its source in Thomas More’s *History of Richard III* (c. 1513) to the ballad collections of Deloney or Michael Drayton’s *England’s Heroical Epistles* (1597). It also represented a civic figure (Matthew Shore) as the most capable and ‘noble’ figure of the reign, and therefore the most tragic. Shore, in the first play, successfully defends London against the Falconbridge Rebellion while Edward IV himself is too busy drinking to get involved. Deloney’s brilliant and popular prose fictions worked in an analogous way. While Deloney’s civic heroes are invariably loyal defenders of their monarch, their character is persistently shaped by forcefully choreographed moments in which aristocratic or monarchical characters have to, literally, make way for the medievalist civic hero. In *Thomas of Reading*, for example, Henry I meets a huge train of clothiers’ wagons on the road between London and Wales:

And it is to be remembred, that the King met them in such a place, so narrow and straight, that he with all the rest of his traine, were faine to stand vp close to the hedge, whilst the carts passed by, the which at that time being in number about two hundred, was neere hand an houre ere the King could get roome to be gone.¹⁷

Though set in the earlier sixteenth century, Deloney’s *Jack of Newbury* negotiates the places of civic and monarchical figures in a notably similar way. Deloney’s protagonist greets a royal messenger’s request for him to approach the king with the astonishing reply: ‘his Grace hath a horse, and I am on foote, therefore will him to come to mee: beside that, while I am away, our enemies might come and put my people in hazard as the Scots did England, while our King was in France’.¹⁸ The provocative, assertive nature of this civic medievalism is palpable, and requires a persistently awkward, and often comic, negotiation between aristocratic and civic claims on the medieval past.

It might not be, then, that the medievalism of the later sixteenth century is any less controversial than that of the period of the Reformation, but that the generic and cultural battlegrounds shift and change, newer forms of

medievalism act creatively in environments very different from historiography and polemic. This is nowhere more evident than on the stage, in the wealth of history plays produced in the period. The high point of this genre is the 1590s, though it stretches forward to at least John Ford's *Perkin Warbeck* (1634). Marlowe's *Edward II* and the two tetralogies of Shakespeare's plays remain the most read and performed examples of this flourishing of medievalist theatre, but a cornucopia of others (usually lacking authorial attribution) are extant. One germane example here is the controversy over how Foxe's martyr, John Oldcastle, could be reimagined on the Elizabethan stage. Among the most famous creations of the genre is Shakespeare's Rabelaisian Falstaff in the *Henry IV* plays (c. 1596–c. 1600). It is important to remember that the character was originally named 'Oldcastle', the alteration to 'Falstaff' leaving awkward signs of revision in a number of play-texts, and prompting the uncharacteristically forthright statement from Shakespeare in the epilogue to 2 *Henry IV* that 'Oldcastle died martyr, and this is not the man.'¹⁹ The Chamberlain's Men's competitors, the Admiral's Men, jumped into the controversy over Oldcastle's reputation with 1 *Sir John Oldcastle* (1599). This 'counter-play' began by urging 'Let fair truth be graced, / Since forged invention former time defaced', adapting the antiquarian language of authenticity and forgery to shape its own theatrical representation of the Foxean martyr. What is most interesting about the play, though, is both its saintly, Foxean representation of Oldcastle and its shifting of the transgressive corpulence, theft, and revelry of Falstaff / Oldcastle onto the clerical character of 'Sir John of Wrotham'. In lines that evoke the comically forthright, confessional tone and highway robbery of Falstaff in 1 *Henry IV*, Wrotham argues, 'Let's not be ashamed of our trade. The King has been a thief himself'. The curious nature of this medievalism – marked by Reformation controversy but re-formed in new circumstances and unexpected genres – is also clearly visible in the huge volume of medievalist verse produced in the period which, as Bart van Es has noted, is still 'relatively neglected', although Georgia Brown has termed it 'a new kind of history' which is able to 'articulate the private perspective on famous historical events, through [its] particular combination of lyric with narrative history'.²⁰ Among the most curious of moments in this literature is a notable episode of self-conscious medievalism that occurs towards the end of Drayton's *Legend of Great Cromwell* (1607), a verse narrative history-tragedy about the instigator of the Dissolution of the monasteries. Addressing the corruption of the church, Drayton's Cromwell recalls how 'PIERCE the wise Plowman, in his vision saw / Conscience sore hurt', and goes on to offer a 79-line verse paraphrase of the action of Langland's final passus, complete

with personifications such as ‘Clergie’, ‘Conscience’, and the ‘Barn of Unitie’, ‘Sir Penetrans-Domos’, ‘Leechcraft’, and the horror that ‘Contrition had forgot to weepe’.²¹ Here, then, is a striking example of the outcomes of the cultural movements sketched out in the first part of this chapter. An historical poem about the instigator of the Dissolution is partly shaped by a re-formation of one of the great poetic works of the later Middle Ages. Thomas Cromwell is inspired by a verse paraphrase of the final, apocalyptic passus of *Piers Plowman* even as we see, fast-approaching, ‘blinde Fortune’ come to strike him down. Drayton’s poem, like many other ventures into historical narrative in either prose, drama, or verse in this period, situates the historical past within the generic horizons of *de casibus* (‘fall of the great’) tragedy, itself a medieval literary form usually associated with Boccaccio, Chaucer’s ‘Monk’s Tale’, and Lydgate’s monumental *Fall of Princes*. The continuity of this genre which generated the many redactions of *The Mirror for Magistrates* and Drayton’s and Daniel’s poems is a perfect example of the awkward and intriguing status of medievalism in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. This is a poem that addresses the violently reforming Tudor past as palpably ‘past’, as much a part of history as the reign of Edward II, yet finds inspiration in Middle English poetry, in a generic tradition with clear roots in the later Middle Ages. To return to my earlier comments about Shakespeare’s images of Chaucer rolling in his grave and ‘bare ruined’ monastic buildings: Chaucer’s bones might be in the ground, but they are not firmly interred enough to prevent his voice being heard, and the ‘bare ruined choirs’ of sonnet 73 are both a melancholic image of the pre-Dissolution past and a generative metaphor for leafless trees and aged poets, oddly germane even as it describes something cold, declining or dissolved.

NOTES

1. J. Simpson, *The Oxford English Literary History Volume 2: 1350–1547: Reform and Cultural Revolution*, (Oxford, 2002), p. 1.
2. K. Duncan-Jones (ed.), *Shakespeare’s Sonnets* (Arden, 2005), 73, ll. 1, 4.
3. John Carey (ed.), *John Donne: The Major Works* (Oxford, 1990), Satire 2, l. 60.
4. Lois Potter (ed.), *The Two Noble Kinsmen* (Arden, 1997), prologue, ll. 10–18.
5. H. Cooper *Shakespeare and the Medieval World* (London, 2012), p. 196.
6. B. Cummings (ed.), *The Book of Common Prayer: The Texts of 1549, 1559, and 1662* (Oxford, 2011), p. 5.
7. G. E. Duffield (ed.), *The Works of William Tyndale* (Philadelphia, 1964), pp. 31–32.
8. J. Bale, *Laboryouse journey* (STC 15445), B1r. The passage is also quoted in Simpson, pp. 9–10.
9. J. Zezula, ‘Scholarly Medievalism in Renaissance France’, *Studies in Medievalism*, 3 (1987), 11–20.
10. R. Crowley (ed.), *The Vision of Piers Plowman* (STC 19906), *2r.

11. S. Echard, *Printing the Middle Ages* (Philadelphia, 2008), pp. 25, 27.
12. Stapleton (trans.), *The History of the Church of England Compiled by Venerable Bede, Englishman* (STC 1778), * 2r, 2v, 3r.
13. Foxe, *Acts and Monuments* (STC 11222), 2.327. Compare also 1570 (STC 11223), 5.698.
14. E. M. W. Tillyard, *The Elizabethan World Picture* (London, 1943), pp. 3, 7, 107–108.
15. H. Cooper, 'Introduction', in R. Morse, H. Cooper and P. Holland (eds.), *Medieval Shakespeares: Past and Present* (Cambridge, 2013), p. 1.
16. Thomas Wilson, *The Arte of Rhetorique*, ed. G. H. Mair (Gainsville, 1964), p. 162.
17. M. Lawlis (ed.), *The Novels of Thomas Deloney* (Bloomington, 1961), pp. 269–270.
18. Lawlis, *The Novels of Thomas Deloney*, p. 36.
19. See P. Corbin and D. Sedge (eds.), *The Oldcastle Controversy* (Manchester, 1991).
20. B. van Es, 'Michael Drayton, Literary History, and Histories in Verse', *Review of English Studies*, 59 (2008), 255–269, 268, 260; G. Brown, *Redefining Elizabethan Literature* (Cambridge, 2004), p. 179.
21. J. W. Hebel (ed.), *The Works of Michael Drayton* (Oxford, 1932), II. Ll. 785–786, 863.

Romantic medievalism

The term ‘Romantic era’ suggests an age influenced by the larger-than-life world of medieval romance, stories of great adventures, supernatural intervention, and powerful emotions. Before 1820, European writers had begun to use the word ‘romantic’ to describe something prompting an emotional response similar to romance. Even though in Britain, in particular, knowledge of medieval romance was vague and tended to be shaped as much by Edmund Spenser’s Elizabethan allegory *The Faerie Queene*, which Chris Jones in this volume justifiably describes as itself a work of historiographical recovery, as by reading medieval works, it was this view of the Middle Ages, as providing opportunities for adventure and the fantastic, that seems to have stimulated the Romantic imagination. For example, in Sir Walter Scott’s 1814 ‘romance’ *Waverley*, when Edward Waverley visits the Scottish Highlands, he is enchanted to find himself not only in an untamed landscape but also in a society shaped by ancient feudal practices; the word ‘romantic’ appears in the main text some two dozen times.

At the same time, authors such as S. T. Coleridge, influenced by their reading of German thinkers, suggested an opposition between ‘classical’ and ‘romantic’.¹ By the later eighteenth century, northern Europe was in recovery from the cultural inferiority complex that privileged the literature and style of ancient Greece and Rome over indigenous history, arts, and culture. In part, this may have been a reaction against the American and French republics established after their respective revolutions, where the revolutionaries’ rejection of feudalism and divinely appointed monarchs led them to find models for the state in the ancient republics of Athens and Rome (medievalism was nevertheless to make a resurgence in France after the end of the Napoleonic era). Yet, while in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, France and the United States portrayed their national identities as in part a rejection of medievalism and especially of feudalism, other national groups turned back to the Middle Ages to find – indeed, to create – their own sense of who they were.

To cite one influential example, in 1810 artists from the Vienna Academy, modelling themselves on the guilds of the Middle Ages, moved into an abandoned monastery in Rome. The ‘Nazarenes’ were largely Roman Catholic, many by conversion; they rejected classicism and found inspiration in medieval art. While the subject matter for many of their paintings was drawn from the Bible, some members of the group were also interested in the medieval roots of German nationalism and found in art the expression of nationalist identity. They were inspired by historians such as Johann Gottfried Herder, who, ironically drawing inspiration from a Roman text, Tacitus’s *Germania*, were developing a myth of a free Germanic people, a parallel but distinct tradition from the Romans; a few years later, G.W.F. Hegel was also to identify a specifically Germanic ‘spirit’ emerging after the decline of Rome. Thus while Romantic medievalism’s stress on cultural identity might seem at odds with the common Romantic emphasis on individual feeling, the proponents of ‘Germania’ claimed a cultural tradition of personal and political freedom. In *Another Philosophy of History* (*Auch eine Philosophie der Geschichte*) Herder praised the later Middle Ages for nourishing ‘the heart and not the head’. He observes, ‘Romance (*Roman*) it may have been, yet what a Romance, a real new blossoming of the human spirit!’²

One of the most influential studies of German identity was written in French. Germaine de Staël’s 1810 *De L’Allemagne* (Germany) suggested a German temperament derived from these ancient Gothic ancestors, and observes of German writers that their ‘genius’ is ‘of a colour rather Gothic than classical. Their imagination disports itself in old towers and battlements, among knights, sorceresses, and specters’.³ She sees ‘Germany’ as still influenced by the ‘spirit of chivalry’ (37). De Staël’s preface explains that the Napoleonic government saw her book as ‘not French’ (x), her enthusiasm for an identity derived from the Middle Ages being interpreted (probably correctly) as a critique of France’s rejection of such values. Culture, history and aesthetics thus combined to imagine a Germany that had never actually existed as a unified state.⁴

In contrast, Britain, as a nation of islands, has a distinct geographical identity, and after the Acts of Union of 1801 brought the government of Ireland to London alongside England, Wales, and Scotland, it also had an enforced political unity. During this period of centralisation, also a time when due to the expansion of industry an increasing proportion of the population started to live in urban environments, writers and artists paid even more attention to Britain’s ‘Celtic fringes’ and the folk traditions preserved in outlying regions of the British Isles. Such regions seemed to preserve a way of life closer to nature than was possible in contemporary urban

existence, and thus those who lived as their ancestors had done for centuries became the subject of the Romantic gaze.

Thomas Gray's 1757 ode 'The Bard' is an early instance of such thinking. Although it draws on the classical form of the Pindaric ode, the poem is written from the point of view of the last of the Welsh Bards. Gray explained that the poem is 'founded on a Tradition current in Wales, that EDWARD the First, when he compleated the conquest of that country, ordered all the Bards, that fell into his hands, to be put to death'.⁵ Chris Jones's chapter describes the legend as 'probably false', yet even though Gray may have known that the tradition had little basis on historical events, the story represents the power of poetry to preserve national memory. A few years later, Thomas Percy undertook a similarly inspired national endeavour when he published *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry*. Percy had come across a manuscript containing many ancient ballads and he used these as the foundation for a three-volume collection of ballad poetry. Some of the ballads were fragmentary or seemed to Percy not to represent adequately his own vision of the Middle Ages; for example, he expanded 'Sir Cauline' to develop the character of the king's daughter, whom he called 'Christabelle', a name that Coleridge was later to use in a fragmentary medieval poem of his own invention.

Percy found it necessary to justify his publication of verses of such 'great simplicity... in the present state of improved literature' as antiquarian curiosities printed on the recommendation of learned friends.⁶ Later ballad collectors were less apologetic about their undertakings. Joseph Ritson, for example, stressed authenticity and truth to his sources; his ballad collections include poems on folk subjects: in 1795, for example, he published an extensive compilation of Robin Hood poems and traditions. Walter Scott and like-minded antiquarians collected ballads and tales from oral tradition, which he published as *The Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*. Scott explained his choice of the border region between Scotland and England as the main focus of his collection because ancient traditions and superstitions survived there and because it had 'formed the stage, upon which were presented the most memorable conflicts of the two gallant nations'.⁷ While Scott and his associates were sometimes over-trusting of their informants, their willingness to believe that the songs they collected were genuinely ancient shows a new respect for the Middle Ages. Moreover, as Chris Jones points out in his discussion of *The Lay of the Last Minstrel*, Scott's historic recoveries gave him the knowledge to formulate his own medievalist poetry, most of which is set in the murky period that marks the transition between medieval and modern values and ways of life.

When reading ballads Romantic-era readers liked to believe that they were connecting with the times of bards, minstrels, and troubadours. Troubadour medievalism was a common trope among women poets. At a time when women had no votes and few opportunities to comment on politics, medieval settings could provide a means to express opinions in an allegorised form. Perhaps because of the freedom that the troubadour lifestyle seemed to represent, a number of woman poets wrote works in this tradition, including Letitia Elizabeth Landon (*The Troubadour*, 1825), and Louisa Stuart Costello, who moreover was to edit *Specimens of the Early Poetry of France*, published in 1835.⁸

Ballads hence sometimes functioned as a form of national resistance, or at least a continuation of tradition. Robert Burns collected hundreds of Scots songs and ballads for the *Scots Musical Museum* and while many of the lyrics and melodies were fairly recent, a few could claim medieval origins, such as ‘Scots Wha Hae’, based on an ancient melody believed to be Robert the Bruce’s war song at the Battle of Bannockburn. An offshoot of the ballad revival was the ‘national melody’ or ‘national song’, in which lyrics representative of national cultures were written to be sung to traditional airs. Thomas Moore published series of *Irish Melodies* between 1807 and 1834; while many of the songs contain no specific historical references, a number refer back to the glories of the Irish Middle Ages. Similarly, Felicia Hemans wrote *Welsh Melodies*, poems recalling Welsh history set to Welsh airs. In poems such as ‘Chant of the Bards before their Massacre by Edward I’ she implies that the bardic tradition of the Middle Ages is not dead; the following year she contributed a poem to an Eisteddfod in London, a deliberate revival of the Welsh tradition of poetry and song.

Besides ballads and music, Romantic-era writers also practised the transcription of stories and beliefs from oral tradition. In the German states, the brothers Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm started publishing collections of traditional stories *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* (Children’s and Household Tales) from 1815. In Britain, John Brand’s *Observations on the Popular Antiquities of Great Britain* (1777) promised to illustrate ‘the Origin of our Vulgar Customs’. Francis Grose’s *Provincial Glossary* (1787) collected local dialect phrases, proverbs, and superstitions. Collections of fairy tales started appearing in Britain and Ireland by the 1820s; Thomas Crofton Croker, for example, collected Irish fairy tales that caught the attention of the Grimms.

A parallel feature to the new interest in traditional song and beliefs was the Gothic Revival in architecture. As identity became less determined by religious affiliation, even national groups that had embraced Protestantism were able to reclaim the material remains of the Middle Ages as their own heritage. Until this time, religion had been an obstacle to the admiration of the Middle

Ages. Protestants represented the universality of the Roman Catholic faith in western Europe prior to the Reformation as a leading cause of ignorance, oppression, and superstition; in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries Protestants destroyed many examples of medieval religious art as idolatrous. In Romantic-era Britain and the German states, the ruined remains of medieval ecclesiastical buildings became no longer symbols of Protestant victories over Roman Catholicism but gloomy reminders of mutability. John Ganim's chapter in this volume notes the eighteenth century's new enthusiasm for the many medieval ruins in Britain. As tourism increased, destinations expanded not merely to Greek and Roman remains overseas but also to medieval castles, abbeys, and ruins in Britain and other parts of Europe. Prompted by works such as William Gilpin's *Three Essays on the Picturesque* (1794), visitors found that the melancholy contemplation of the past suited the Romantic temperament. In the German states the Dresden-based painter Caspar David Friedrich painted evocative scenes of ruined abbeys, while in Britain, ruins such as Tintern Abbey became a locus for such travel in pursuit of the picturesque and the subject for paintings, sketches, and poetry.

The result was a new wave of enthusiasm for the 'pointed', 'northern', or 'Gothic' style of architecture of the medieval period. All three of these terms – pointed in contrast to the geometric symmetry of classical architecture, and Gothic and northern in rejection of classicism – stress national heritage. In the forefront of the Gothic Revival was Horace Walpole, who constructed his home Strawberry Hill in the Gothic style, although as John Ganim's chapter notes, it was more an 'imagined vision of the Gothic' than a straightforward imitation of a medieval structure. His was the first of a number of such medievalist experiments. William Beckford's desire to live in a medieval abbey was so great that he had Fonthill Abbey constructed out of cement; it was decorated inside and out in medieval style, possibly in ironic contrast between the at least theoretically chaste lifestyle of medieval nuns and monks and his own notoriety stimulated by the sex and violence in his novel *Vathek*. (Admittedly, when Byron, who inherited the medieval Newstead Abbey himself but was unable to afford the upkeep, visited Beckford, he was disappointed to see nothing scandalous at all.) Sir Walter Scott spent far more money than he could afford rebuilding his home Abbotsford into a medieval baronial hall.

Walpole was also the originator of a genre of fiction that took hold during the Romantic era, the Gothic romance. In 1764 he pseudonymously published *The Castle of Otranto, A Gothic Romance*, supposedly translated from a copy 'found in the library of an ancient catholic family in the north of England'⁹ and dating from the twelfth or thirteenth century. The imaginary editor William Marshall explains the fantastic elements, such as a giant

magic helmet and a bleeding statue, as marks of the medieval temperament: 'Belief in every kind of prodigy was so established in those dark ages, that an author would not be faithful to the *manners* of the time, who should omit all mention of them' (v). 'Gothic' was functionally Walpole's term for the medieval, but the label became applied to the genre in general. As developed by Ann Radcliffe in the 1790s in novels such as *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, the defining features of the genre proved not to be the supernatural elements but rather an atmosphere of threats and mystery. Most Gothic romances were not set in the medieval period, but they often developed atmospheric settings from elements of the medieval, such as abbeys and the monks and nuns who inherited them; castles and dungeons; and frequently an absence of legal protection for the characters, especially women. For some perceptive observers, the kind of oppressive structures seen in the Gothic novel, such as secret ecclesiastical courts, unjustified imprisonment, and forced marriages, might have been an allegorical commentary on the age of the French Revolution and a condemnation of feudal and religious tradition. Yet for many readers, in the most part distanced from the action by time and space, the medieval elements in the settings opened up a more exciting world, so that both Gothic architecture and the Gothic romance encouraged a taste for the medieval. Victor Hugo devoted long sections of his 1831 historical novel *Notre-Dame de Paris* to discussions of Gothic architecture, his tale of medieval life thus combining elements of history, Gothic architecture, and devices from the Gothic romance.

The new enthusiasm for the medieval prompted more systematic study. In 1762 Richard Hurd's *Letters on Chivalry and Romance* had encouraged a return to the ideals of the Middle Ages, yet Hurd's sense of the medieval was based largely on his reading of Spenser. If the Middle Ages were no longer a time when civilisation regressed but an important part of national heritage, more accurate knowledge was needed. Whereas earlier histories (e.g. those of David Hume and Paul Rapin de Thoyras) had relied mainly on chronicles, Romantic-era historians began to use archival research and material evidence such as works of art and architecture to create a picture of the Middle Ages. Even though Henry Hallam's *View of the State of Europe during the Middle Ages* (1818) assumes that civilisation has now progressed beyond that of the Middle Ages, his book contains much solid information, especially about the state of law and land ownership in medieval times. Hallam's 1827 *Constitutional History of England* also emphasises the extent to which British law was indebted to the Middle Ages. Sharon Turner's *History of the Anglo-Saxons* draws on linguistic and archaeological knowledge as well as written sources to present a picture of the Saxons as the ancestors of the present-day English. First published in 1799–1805, the

work was later expanded to incorporate recent scholarship on Anglo-Saxon language and literature. Robert Henry's *History of Great Britain from the first invasion of it by the Romans, Written on a New Plan*, of which the first volume appeared in 1771, paid attention not just to politics and religion but also to culture, economics, and manners and customs. Similarly, Joseph Strutt, antiquarian and engraver, made the Middle Ages more vivid to readers by reproducing rare medieval illustrations that amounted to new research on medieval dress and cultural practices. His publications include *A Complete View of the Dresses and Habits of the People of England* (1796–1799) and *The Sports and Pastimes of the People of England* (1802).

Research in language and literature also expanded knowledge of medieval culture and ways of life. At the beginning of the Romantic era, relatively few medieval works were available in printed form. In Britain, while Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* were available in a selection of editions and adaptations, Sir Thomas Malory's *Le Morte D'Arthur* and Langland's *Piers Plowman* had not been reprinted for centuries. As a result, although frequent allusion is made to King Arthur and especially to Merlin in the literature of the period, details tend not to be precise. Editions of medieval works did not start appearing in extensive numbers until the 1830s, when scholars such as the Grimms in the German states, Frederic Madden and Thomas Wright in Britain, and Francisque Michel in France began to make more texts available.

The Romantic era nevertheless saw some important additions to the literary canon and to the study of the history of language. The Danish scholar G. J. Thorkelin was the first to transcribe the Beowulf manuscript and published an edition with Latin translation in 1815. *Beowulf* itself became a contested site for nationalism, as Thorkelin saw his translation as a recovery of Denmark's traditions; the British scholars Sharon Turner and John Josias Conybeare suggested that it resembled 'the poems attributed to Caedmon' and was thus the beginning of English poetry;¹⁰ and still others found a source for a shared Germanic heritage: John Mitchell Kemble dedicated his 1833 edition to Jakob Grimm. As Robert E. Bjork has demonstrated, the Danish scholars Thorkelin and Rasmus Rask saw the study of Anglo-Saxon as a form of nationalistic recovery.¹¹ In contrast Conybeare; Joseph Bosworth, who published his first Anglo-Saxon grammar in 1823; and Benjamin Thorpe, who studied under Rask, helped begin the systematic study of Anglo-Saxon in Britain as part of the tradition of English language and literature.¹²

As the years passed, more texts in Old and Middle English became accessible. The 'Bibliomania' of the early years of the nineteenth century dramatically raised the value placed on manuscripts and early printed

books. This led, in 1812, to the founding of the Roxburghe Club as a small group dedicated to printing works of historical interest; other historical publishing societies were to follow in the 1830s. Towards the end of the Romantic era, antiquarians and historians found that they needed a dignified adjective to mark the focus of their studies, and began to use the term 'medieval'.¹³

Even though knowledge of the medieval period was growing, the use of the Middle Ages in politics continued to be highly selective. At a time when opposing the government could lead to serious consequences, including imprisonment, the use of a medieval setting sometimes became a way to provide direct or indirect critique of the status quo. Robert Southey, for example, created a sympathetic interpretation of the Peasants' Revolt in his drama *Wat Tyler*, a source of an embarrassment for him in his later years when he became a staunch supporter of the English monarchy and church. Even then, in 1831 he presented the idea in *Sir Thomas More; Or, Colloquies on the Progress and Prospects of Society* that the English people had been happiest at the end of the Middle Ages; Sir Thomas More remarks that the poor had no benefit from the Reformation since 'nothing has grown up in the decay of the feudal system, to repay them for the kindly attachments which existed under it'.¹⁴

However picturesque Southey might envisage the medieval village to have been, most activists seeking radical political reform found the concept of feudalism execrable. Rather than rejecting the Middle Ages entirely, however, instead they embraced the idea of the 'Norman Yoke', which, as Christopher Hill has shown, had emerged in the seventeenth century.¹⁵ According to this myth, under the Anglo-Saxon kings, and particularly during the reign of Alfred the Great, England had had a free constitution with democratically elected annual parliaments. William of Normandy's conquest of England in 1066 had taken away these rights and replaced them with a monarchy and landowning aristocracy. Thomas Paine, for example, frequently accuses William of destroying the English constitution. Paine, however, is vague about what preceded the Conquest, while other radicals embraced the idea of England as a Saxon paradise. In the forefront of Saxonists was Major John Cartwright, who campaigned for many decades for universal male suffrage. From *Take Your Choice* (1776) to *The English Constitution Produced and Illustrated* (1823) he declared that the 'godlike' Alfred had defended the right of all the English to be 'as free as their own thoughts'.¹⁶ Insistent that the 'admirable polity of our Anglo-Saxon forefathers' had created an English constitution with an elected monarch and annual parliaments, Cartwright sought a restoration of medieval rights. Other admirers of Alfred include the Poet Laureate Henry James Pye, who

made Alfred the subject of a dull epic poem in 1801; and the historian Catherine Macaulay, who called her home 'Alfred-House'.

Anglo-Saxonism also played a significant role in the establishment of the Constitution of the United States. The formative years of the United States of America imply a rejection of medieval monarchical traditions in favour of a mode of government drawn from the Roman Republic. Nevertheless, as Reginald Horsman has shown, a number of America's founders, and Thomas Jefferson in particular, believed that the American Constitution recreated Anglo-Saxon legal practices. He studied the Anglo-Saxon language himself and made it a required part of the curriculum at the University of Virginia.¹⁷ Although Romantic-era Anglo-Saxonism focused on ideas rather than on heredity, the concept of an Anglo-Saxon race destined to bring civilisation to the New World was a precursor to the belief in 'Manifest Destiny' and Teutonic racial superiority that would ultimately lead the United States to civil war.¹⁸

Beyond the Anglo-Saxons, the other focus for claims of historical rights in England was Magna Carta. Radical reformers such as Cartwright and the radical printer William Hone argued that John's signing of the Charter at Runnymede in 1215 was not the creation of a new constitution, but rather the reinscription of ancient rights.¹⁹ Hone called Magna Carta part of the 'wealth' of Britain's constitutional heritage.²⁰ At a time when legal rights were under threat – habeas corpus was suspended in 1794–1795, 1798–1801, and 1817–1818 – Hone and others insisted that Magna Carta's protection against imprisonment without due cause was an English right dating back to the Middle Ages. Thus when King John signed Magna Carta he was conceding the limited powers of the monarchy and that even kings were subject to ancient law.

Significantly, a young King John was among the villains in Sir Walter Scott's *Ivanhoe*. A generic development of the Romantic period was the form of the novel that became known as the historical romance – the word romance here implying love and adventure rather than the fantastic. Historical romances of this period nevertheless often incorporated features of the Gothic novel, such as mysterious warnings and Gothic spaces. The historical novel seemed a way to make use of the more extensive knowledge of the medieval world, and this provided the motivation for Joseph Strutt's attempt to write a historical novel set in the fifteenth century, *Queenhoo-Hall*. Strutt did not live to complete the novel, which focused more on the manners and customs of the period than on plot; Scott later claimed that editing it for publication was part of the inspiration for his Waverley Novels. In point of fact, Scott would also have been familiar with Jane Porter's 1810 novel *The Scottish Chiefs*, centring on Sir William Wallace and making him

both saintly and heroic. Although Scott's narrative poems border the medieval and Tudor periods, his early novels represent post-Reformation Scottish history and he did not attempt a medieval romance until *Ivanhoe*, published anonymously in 1820 and widely read throughout Europe and in the United States of America. *Ivanhoe* acknowledges that the 'condition of the English people' was far from perfect in the late twelfth century, when women, ethnic minorities such as the Jews, and the poor were systematically oppressed.²¹ The narrator calls Richard the Lionheart the embodiment of the 'brilliant, but useless, character of a knight of romance' (471). Competing systems of laws – Norman, Saxon, Jewish, even the outlaws' law in the forest – leave characters constantly in personal danger. Moreover, even though the Norman Conquest was more than a century behind them, the novel depicts the Saxons and Normans as still strongly distinct, with the displaced Saxons serving the Norman landowners. The novel not only features Richard and his brother Prince John but also Robin Hood. Robin Hood is here portrayed as an English yeoman, unlike in Thomas Love Peacock's *Maid Marian* (1822) where he is the aristocratic Earl of Huntingdon; both interpretations of the famous outlaw could be justified from the ballad tradition. *Ivanhoe* ends with reconciliation as Saxons and Normans unite, helping to create a myth of origin for the modern-day English, to the extent that later readers tended to overlook the critique of medieval society embedded in the novel. Key scenes in *Ivanhoe*, such as the tournament, the siege, and trial scenes featuring the concept of Wager of Battle, were to become the inspiration for much of the later cultural conception of the Middle Ages. For example, the 1839 Eglinton Tournament, a lavish attempt to recreate a medieval tournament, followed the details of the tournament as described in *Ivanhoe* precisely. Figure 11 shows an illustration of how the Eglinton Tournament was supposed to take place (the events of the day were hampered by heavy rain); it could almost be an illustration for *Ivanhoe*.

Ivanhoe is set in the period of the Crusades, which became for many Romantic-era readers a time when chivalric behaviour flourished – what Hegel suggested was a 'noble enthusiasm' inspired both by religion and by the example of the 'Oriental chivalric spirit' of the opposing forces.²² Kenelm Henry Digby's *Broad Stone of Honour*, first published in 1822 when the author was in his early twenties, proclaims itself *Rules for the Gentlemen of England*. For Digby the Middle Ages held the key to what Britain's future could be. He hoped that young men would be 'taught the lessons which belong to gentle education, those of piety and heroism, of loyalty, generosity, and honour; whereby they might be taught, as servants of a British Monarch, to emulate the virtue of their famous ancestors'.²³ Digby admired the examples of chivalry found in the stories of King Arthur and Charlemagne. Unlike

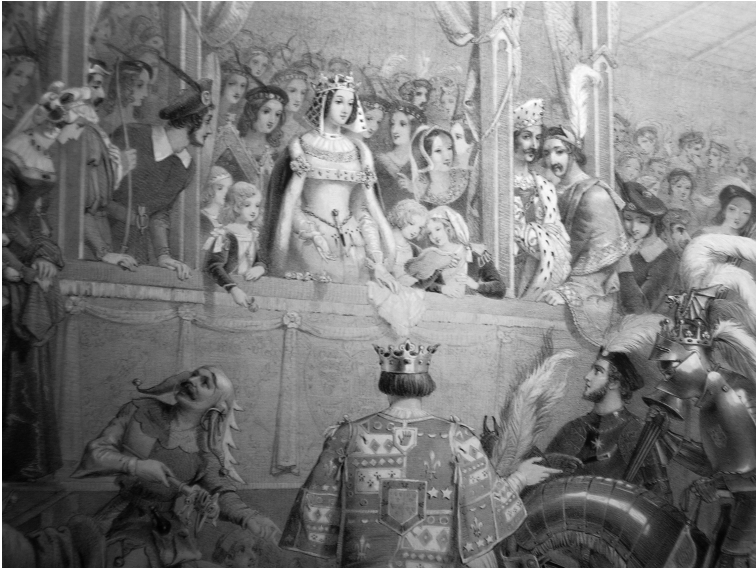


Figure 11 Edward Henry Courbould, 'The Lord of the Tournament presents to the Queen of Beauty as Victor'. From *The Eglinton Tournament*, dedicated to the Earl of Eglinton (1839–40).

most of his contemporaries Digby seems to have had access to Malory's Arthurian stories, which he cites repeatedly as a documentary source on the chivalrous way of life (e.g. p. 139). He particularly respected the Crusaders for combining chivalric and Christian values. A few years later, after his conversion to Roman Catholicism, Digby revised his book, changing the subtitle to *The True Sense and Practice of Chivalry*; these later versions especially emphasise Crusaders as the embodiment of the values of the Middle Ages.

About the same time, however, Walter Scott was creating a more secular view of the Crusades. Scott contributed an essay on chivalry to the supplement to the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* where he located the origins of chivalry not in Christianity but in the practices of the ancient Teutonic tribes. Scott represents the Crusades as the opportunity for chivalric behaviour rather than inspired by a Christian culture as in Digby's envisioning of them. *Ivanhoe* had featured some of the exoticism of the Crusades through the procession of the Templars, which includes Saracen attendants and richly clad squires so that the 'whole appearance' of the Templar Brian de Bois-Guilbert 'and his retinue was wild and outlandish' (37). Both churchman and warrior, Brian embodies the spiritual corruption of the Roman Catholic Church, boasting, for example, of his exemption from the standard vow of chastity. Even he, though, holds to some forms of chivalric honour, telling

Rebecca the Jewess, 'Many a law, many a commandment have I broken, but my word never' (255).

The prefaces in Scott's *Tales of the Crusaders*, written in 1832, reveal developing cultural attitudes towards the Crusades. First, Scott notes that his friends urged the title on him, implying that in their opinion, given current interest in the Crusades, this would be a good marketing strategy for *The Betrothed* and *The Talisman* (published in 1825 and set in the reigns of Henry II and Richard I respectively). In *The Betrothed* the Saxon and Norman themes of *Ivanhoe* are pushed to an almost parodic level in the representation of Eveline Berenger's fanatical Saxon and Norman aunts, but this story too ends with ethnic reconciliation. Second, in the preface to the Magnum Opus edition of *The Talisman*, Scott explains that readers were disappointed with the lack of focus on the Crusades themselves in *The Betrothed*, and that tourism has expanded knowledge of the locations of the Crusades.²⁴ This preface takes a bizarre turn when Scott reprints parts of old verse narratives describing King Richard as making a cannibal feast out of Saracens, undercutting the idea of the Crusades as a Christian quest. The narrative itself represents Christianity and chivalry at odds: 'The distinctions of religion, nay, the fanatical zeal which animated the followers of the Cross and of the Crescent against each other, was much softened by a feeling so natural to generous combatants, and especially cherished by the spirit of chivalry' (498). The story opens with a Crusader and an Emir working together and showing mutual respect. The Saracen leader Saladin is portrayed as cultivated, humane, and above all chivalrous, while the main villains of the piece are the supposedly Christian Austrian Duke Conrade and the Grand Master of the Templars. Although Scott does not go so far as to endorse the idea of marriage between Christians and Muslims, *The Talisman* suggests that chivalrous behaviour transcends racial and religious boundaries and that Britons (both the English as represented by King Richard and the Scots as represented by Prince David of Scotland) have reason to be proud of their medieval heritage.

A final form of Romantic medievalism is drama. Although the passion plays revived in the 1600s from medieval practices and performed every 10 years in Oberammergau, which started to become a tourist destination, the Reformation in northern Europe had erased most memories of the Biblical drama cycles of the later Middle Ages. In the Romantic era, however, opinions began to change. Thomas Warton's *History of English Poetry*, published in 1775, noted of English mystery plays that he had examined manuscript copies and had seen in them 'gross and open obscenities', including that Adam and Eve were 'exhibited on the stage naked'.²⁵ Only a generation later, as 'Bibliomania' prompted a new interest not just in printed books but also in medieval manuscripts, enthusiasts began to produce

printed editions of mystery plays and to identify them as important examples of medieval popular drama. In 1818 J.H. Markham produced an edition of the Chester plays *De Diluvio Noe* and *De Occisione Innocentium* for the exclusive Roxburghe Club. Thomas Sharp published a 'Dissertation on the Coventry Mysteries' and an edition of the Pageant of the Shearmen and Taylors in 1825; Sharp's work continues to be valuable since most of his sources were later destroyed by fire. William Hone printed some mystery plays in the later 1820s, arguing that medieval religious drama was a form of popular social celebration.

While medieval drama began to be studied during the Romantic era, it does not seem to have been performed. On the other hand, dramas that referred very loosely to the medieval period and that involved medieval settings and costuming were extremely popular. Unlike in their original staging, Shakespeare's plays were performed in medieval costume, and many theatres used and re-used Gothic-inspired stage sets. Sometimes drama emphasised distance from the Middle Ages and depicted it as a time of romance; other plays suggested that audiences might recognise themselves in medieval characters. The vague historical settings for most of Joanna Baillie's *Plays of the Passions*, for example, suggest that medieval people had similar behaviour and emotional responses to people of the present day. Baillie argued that 'human nature' was 'universal', but even then, she prefaced her 1802 *Ethwald* plays, set in the Anglo-Saxon period, with the observation that she tried to make her imagined version of the early Middle Ages 'consistent with the character of the times'.²⁶ Many plays with medieval settings contain direct or implied criticism of the present day. For example, in 1789, Ann Yearsley's Shakespearian-style drama *Earl Goodwin* was performed in Bristol and Bath. Yearsley presents the Saxon statesman Godwin, Earl of Wessex, as 'seriously what I wish every man to be':²⁷ her 'Goodwin' is not a self-serving murderer as in some of the chronicle accounts but an honest Saxon statesman. One of the most popular and prolific London playwrights of the age, George Colman the Younger, also frequently created or adapted medieval history for stage purposes. For example, *The Battle of Hexham* (1789) is set against the background of the Wars of the Roses, while *The Surrender of Calais* (1791) recounts of the story of Edward III's siege; both plays suggest that the poor suffer during times of war, but both end with the promise of a happier future. Both in Britain and elsewhere in Europe Scott's medieval-themed novels were frequently adapted to the stage, including as operas; some of these even changed the plot of *Ivanhoe* so that Ivanhoe marries Rebecca, not Rowena.²⁸ The stage was therefore a means of familiarising the public to the medieval period as a time of adventure, romance, and elegant style.

Since during the Romantic era medievalism was used for such disparate purposes, it is hard to generalise about its overall cultural impact. While in most cases medievalism serves to support a sense of nationhood, sometimes it justifies the present, and sometimes it critiques it. By approaching the Middle Ages both from religious and from secular points of view, Romantic medievalism certainly set the stage for scholarly research and for the revival of medieval style seen in the later nineteenth century. It may, however, have affected culture in other respects, such as in attitudes towards gender roles. Medievalism may have enabled women writers to comment indirectly on politics and gender relationships, but it was also used to justify gender distinctions. First, the ideas about chivalric behaviour contributed to the 'Young England' movement in Britain during the early Victorian period, and later to the concept of 'Muscular Christianity'. This emphasis on appropriate manly conduct assumed that men and women were fundamentally different. Even though the Romantics do not use the term 'courtly love', most accounts of medieval courtesy suggest that the chivalric code included devotion to women. Scott's 'Essay on Chivalry' points out the 'necessity of the perfect knight having a mistress': the knight would do whatever she desired and fight for her favour in tournaments.²⁹ Similarly, Digby represents chivalry as rescuing women from 'servile subjection'; women depend 'for their influence and dignity upon the continuance of this chivalrous spirit' (386). Digby contrasts the situation of women in chivalric society both with contemporary liberal states such as France that show 'the most sovereign contempt for the female sex' (387) and women who attempt to influence politics (389); 'Women, sustained by the hand of chivalry in the place appointed by their Creator, prompted man to the pursuit of virtue' (389). Chivalry thus directed 'female influence' to 'its proper and legitimate sphere'.

At the same time, interest grew in specific medieval women. Examples from medieval literature and history emerging in the Romantic period contributed to the conception of specific gender roles developing in the nineteenth century. Joan of Arc was the subject of many works of art and literature. Friedrich Schiller's play *Die Jungfrau von Orleans* (*The Maid of Orleans*, 1801) was frequently performed. Especially after the restoration of the French monarchy in 1815, Pierre-Henri Revoil, sometimes termed a 'troubadour' artist due to his medieval subject-matter, painted Joan of Arc in Rouen prison (1819); Joan's interrogation by the Bishop of Winchester was the subject of Paul Delaroche's 1824 salon painting. In various interpretations, Joan became an example of the love of liberty, of patriotism, of duty, and even of domesticity. Marie-Thérèse Péroux d'Abany wrote a 24-book prose poem titled *L'Amazone française ou Jeanne D'Arc* (*The*

French Amazon, Or Joan of Arc, 1819 and 1823) that encouraged French children, especially girls, to do their patriotic duty. Joan of Arc was a popular figure not only in France but also in England where she inspired a play by Robert Southey, works by a number of female poets including Felicia Hemans, and an essay by William Hazlitt.³⁰ Another medieval woman who continued to receive much attention in England was ‘Fair Rosamond’, the mistress of Henry II; several dramas and operas told the fictitious story of how Henry’s queen Eleanor of Aquitaine forced her to drink poison, thus suggesting the potential dangers of a powerful woman.

The major contribution of the Romantic period to later conceptions of the Middle Ages, however, remains that it became acceptable, indeed patriotic, to take an interest in the medieval past. When the British Houses of Parliament burned down in the 1830s, the government specified that all designs submitted for its replacement must be in Gothic style; France also began a program of Gothic rebuilding about the same time. That architects such as Sir Charles Barry in England and Eugène Viollet-le-Duc in France tried not simply to imitate earlier Gothic but actually to expand on it is just one example of how Europe’s romanticised enthusiasm for medievalism served nationalistic purposes.

NOTES

1. George Whalley outlines the British adoption of the term ‘Romantic’ in ‘England/Romantic – Romanticism’ (Eichner, 157–262).
2. J.G. Herder, *Auch eine Philosophie der Geschichte zur Bildung der Menschheit*, translated by F.M. Barnard as *Yet Another Philosophy of History for the Enlightenment of Mankind* (1774; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), 193, 190.
3. Germaine de Staël, *Germany* (New York: Eastern Kirk, 1814) 1: 14. Subsequent quotations follow this translation.
4. See, for example, Patrick J. Geary, *The Myth of Nations: The Medieval Origins of Europe* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), 22.
5. Thomas Gray, *Odes by Mr. Gray* (Strawberry Hill, 1757), 12.
6. Thomas Percy, *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry*, 4th edn. (London: Rivington, 1794) 1:xiv.
7. Sir Walter Scott, *The Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*, ed. T.F. Henderson, 3 vols. (Edinburgh: William Blackwood, 1902) 1:156.
8. Claire Broome Saunders and Elizabeth Fay have discussed women’s contributions to medievalism during the Romantic era and see a form of freer expression.
9. Horace Walpole, *The Castle of Otranto* ([London] 1765), i.
10. John Josias Conybeare, *Illustrations of Anglo-Saxon Poetry*, ed. William Daniel Conybeare (London: Harding and Lepard, 1826), 34.
11. Robert E. Bjork, ‘Nineteenth-Century Scandinavia and the Birth of Anglo-Saxon Studies’, in *Anglo-Saxonism and the Construction of Social Identity*, ed. Allen

- J. Frantzen and John D. Niles (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1997), 120–121.
12. Clare A. Simmons, *Reversing the Conquest: History and Myth in 19th-Century British Literature* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1990), 63–70.
 13. The *Oxford English Dictionary*'s first recorded use of the word 'mediaeval' is in an antiquarian essay published in 1827.
 14. Robert Southey, *Sir Thomas More; Or Colloquies on the Progress and Prospects of Society* (London: John Murray, 1831) 1: 173.
 15. Christopher Hill, 'The Norman Yoke'. *Puritanism and Revolution* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1958), 50–122.
 16. John Cartwright, *An Appeal, Civil and Military, on the Subject of the English Constitution* (London, 1799), 10.
 17. Reginald Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny: The Origins of American Racial Anglo-Saxonism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981), 18–19.
 18. See Horsman, 219–220.
 19. Anne Pallister traces the admiration for Magna Carta in *Magna Carta: The Heritage of Liberty* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1971).
 20. William Hone, 'The Political House that Jack Built' (London: William Hone, 1819).
 21. Sir Walter Scott, *Ivanhoe* (1820; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1996), 86. Further references are to this edition.
 22. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, compiled from lectures given between 1822 and 1830; trans. J. Sibree (New York: Dover reprints, 1956), 396.
 23. Kenelm Digby, *The Broad Stone of Honor, Or Rules for the Gentlemen of England* (London: Rivington, 1822) 1:xv.
 24. Sir Walter Scott, *The Talisman*, Abbotsford Edition (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1868), 487. Subsequent references follow this edition.
 25. Thomas Warton, *History of English Poetry* (London, 1775), 243–244.
 26. Joanna Baillie, *A Series of Plays* (London: Longman, 1821) 2:x.
 27. Ann Yearsley, *Earl Goodwin, An Historical Play* (London, 1791), Preface.
 28. In *Scott Dramatized* (London: Mansell, 1992), H. Philip Bolton catalogues dozens of plays and operas based on *Ivanhoe* in the 1820s alone (342–353).
 29. Sir Walter Scott, 'Essay on Chivalry', in *Miscellaneous Prose Works* (Edinburgh: Cadell, 1858), 532. Subsequent references follow this edition.
 30. Claire Broome Saunders lists many of the works discussing Joan of Arc before 1850 (Saunders, 79–93).

Academic medievalism and nationalism

In her widely read reflections on the causes and consequences of human violence in the modern world, Hannah Arendt pauses at one point to consider the function of progress and academic research since the beginnings of the modern university in the nineteenth century. She writes,

The irrational nineteenth-century belief in *unlimited* progress has found universal acceptance chiefly because of the astounding development of the natural sciences, which, since the rise of the modern age, actually have been ‘universal’ sciences and therefore could look forward to an unending task in exploring the immensity of the universe. That science [...] should be subject to never-ending progress is by no means certain; that strictly scientific research in the humanities, the so-called *Geisteswissenschaften* that deal with the products of the human spirit, must come to an end by definition is obvious. The ceaseless, senseless demand for original scholarship in a number of fields, where only erudition is now possible, has led either to sheer irrelevancy, the famous knowing of more and more about less and less, or to the development of a pseudo-scholarship which actually destroys its object.¹

Arendt’s general observation provides a helpful backdrop for an evaluation of the role academic researchers and their work have played for the ongoing process of re-creating and re-inventing medieval culture in post-medieval times. In fact, her passage encapsulates some of the major conflicts that shaped the academic reception of the Middle Ages since the 1850s: the attempt of scholars in the humanities to emulate the quantitative and positivistic methods in the natural sciences to find acceptance at the modern university; a certain hegemony of German scholarship in these attempts, as implied in Arendt’s summarising of these scientific paradigms with the German term *Geisteswissenschaften* (‘humanities’): and the opposition to this German hegemony and methodology by twentieth-century American scholars like Arendt herself. Clearly, the history of academic practices, including the study of the Middle Ages, needs to be seen within the context of various other social, political, and cultural forces. From among these, the

inclusion of imagined national communities and their various usable pasts is crucial for a comprehensive understanding of the modern academic construction of medieval culture.

Pre-academic practices

In 1734, shortly after the ‘Society of the Dilettanti’ was founded as an exclusive gentlemen’s London dining club whose membership shared enthusiasm for Greek and Roman culture, Lord Chesterfield could refer to himself with considerable pride as a ‘humble dilettante’. By 1886, however, John Ruskin’s ethos as an educated cultural critic made him dismiss a contemporary’s opinion as that of a ‘mere dilettante’. These two examples, cited in the *Oxford English Dictionary* under the entry ‘dilettante’, demonstrate the dramatic shift between the status of ‘amateurs’ with an interest in premodern texts and artefacts in the 1730s and the demand for trained full-time specialists in the 1880s. While delight (‘dilettante’ derives from Italian *dilettare*, to delight) and ‘love’ (‘amateur’ derives from Latin *amare*, to love) in art and literature was a sufficient foundation for the well-to-do members of an early eighteenth-century club, such gentlemanly enthusiasm gradually became insufficient for the educated scholars who championed disinterestedness and scientific evidence as necessary conditions for work on past texts. The existence of other terms descriptive of the editing, reading, and discussing of premodern texts confirms how undefined a concept, any more than casual engagement with these artefacts, originally was: There are the ‘bibliomaniacs’ and ‘antiquaries’ (also called ‘antiquarians’), often devoted and self-taught individuals who read historical documents. They, in turn, are gradually replaced by ‘philologists’ (also called ‘scholars’, ‘etymologists’, and ‘glossographers’), who abandon the generalised study of premodern culture and life and belletristic pleasure in historical texts to focus on linguistic, historical, and structural analysis. Similarly, the term ‘editor’ (also called ‘transcriber’) appears less and less to refer to the mere arranging of a facsimile black-letter reproduction and preparing of abridged modernised versions of premodern texts, and involves more and more the interventionist practices that would come to comprise modern textual criticism.

Pleasure, delight, and curiosity have been among the main motivating factors for the reading and distribution of premodern texts. Depending on the textual genre, readers and editors are fascinated either by the similarity / modernity or the otherness / alterity of their sources. On the one hand, texts like Geoffrey Chaucer’s long and structurally and linguistic complex poem *Troilus and Criseyde*, with its close focus on the emotions and thoughts of its protagonists, invited modern readers to transcend the centuries which

separated them from fourteenth-century England and to see Chaucer as a 'congenial soul' akin to their own aesthetic preferences and those of the canonical authors of their own present.² On the other hand, the often anonymous medieval romances, variously characterised as 'ancient', 'old', 'early', 'romantic', 'curious', 'wild', or 'Gothic', were enjoyable because of their 'unaffected' premodern simplicity, which enabled readers either to succumb to nostalgia about a seemingly less restrictive 'old' England or to feel good about their temporal distance and perceived civilisatory superiority to an unenlightened and 'barbarous' past.³

Although dismissed as mere amateurs by their more professionalised and specialised successors, the work of eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century students of medieval texts did much to preserve rare manuscripts and assisted later generations in locating, cataloguing, and editing them. While the distribution of their work was often limited to the upper-middle and upper-class membership of the various literary and printing clubs (e.g. the Roxburghe Club, Bannatyne Club, Maitland Club, Abbotsford Club), their rarely ideological but refreshingly comparative approaches allowed readers to experience what they took to be the human voices in medieval texts, a presentist sensibility later rejected by academic readers. Broadly humanistic readings by far outnumbered nationalist or regionalist ones.

Desire for origins and national difference

Perhaps the most important challenge for pre-1850 readers and editors of pre-1500 sources was the absence of a commonly accepted historical framework and terminology for their work. Some Renaissance humanists had summarily derogated as a cultural low point the 'middle age' between a revered Classical Antiquity and their own intentional rebirth of that cultural peak; 'antiquities', 'monuments', and 'age of chivalry' were all used to refer to artefacts or events emerging during the almost 1,000 years between the demise of the Western Roman Empire (476) and the conquest of Constantinople by the Ottoman Turks (1453); the *Oxford English Dictionary* does not record the adjective 'medieval' until 1827; and the linguistic period designation for Old, Middle, Early Modern, and Modern English was disputed all throughout the nineteenth century.

Scholarship in historical semantics indicates in the early nineteenth century a gradual process of semantic narrowing for the concepts used to describe the medieval period, as well as for various stages of linguistic and cultural change. This semantic narrowing is part of an increased implementation of temporality and historicity as central organisational principles for modern thought, and it is mirrored by the numerous '-ism' terms invented to

project historical movement towards future change: Immanuel Kant coins ‘republicanism’, a term which Friedrich Schlegel replaces with ‘democratism’; ‘socialism’, ‘liberalism’, and ‘communism’ followed, soon to be resisted by terms using ‘-isms’, such as ‘conservatism’ to evade the pressure of this new obsession with temporality and the pressure towards progressive movement and change. Fascinatingly, the terms associated with historical development and future change move from the European continent towards the British Isles. Conversely, the English language contributes most of the traditionalist responses to the continental cultural intrusions, including ‘conservatism’ and ‘medievalism’. This linguistic evidence reveals an emerging difference between Britain’s and many continental nations’ relationship with the medieval past. The general tenor in Britain favoured seeing a relatively unproblematic, unique continuity between the country’s medieval heritage and its present-day government and culture, which would explain why the concept of ‘medievalism’ originated in Britain.⁴ The perceived absence of the kind of disruptive events that shook the continent in 1789 (France) or 1848 (Germany; Italy) explains why in Britain the only major early modern revolutionary event could be enshrined as ‘Glorious’ or ‘Sensible’ or ‘Bloodless’. Edmund Burke’s dictum that the Glorious Revolution of 1688 was made ‘to preserve our ancient indisputable laws and liberties, and that ancient constitution of government which is our only security for law and liberty’, well summarises the paradigm of ‘unique continuity’ in English-speaking readings of the Middle Ages.⁵ For the imagined community of Britain, not only did the monarchy survive but ever new re-imaginings of Britishness could find their inspiration in manifold medieval traditions, beginning as early as the Renaissance, as Chris Jones demonstrates in his chapter on ‘Medievalism in British Poetry’. This continuist mentality is still valid after Britain’s victory over the country’s twentieth-century German(ic) invaders, when Winston Churchill declared, in his 1956 *The Birth of Britain*, that ‘King Arthur and his noble knights, guarding the Sacred Flame of Christianity and the theme of a world order, sustained by valour, physical strength, and good horses and armour, slaughtered innumerable hosts of foul barbarians and set decent folk an example for all time.’⁶ Even 200 years after Burke, English director Ridley Scott’s 2010 popular film *Robin Hood* similarly reinforces medieval roots, the birth of Magna C[h]arta under Richard the Lionheart and John Lackland, for an audience proud of British constitutional monarchy and its role in the history of Western civilisation.

If British novelist and scholar Walter Scott was able to prefigure, in his romantic *Ivanhoe* (1820), the historical process during which Normans and Anglo-Saxons came to lay the foundations for modern Great Britain, his counterparts in most nineteenth-century German-speaking regions were

confronted with a vastly different political reality. In fact, for many of them research and scholarship on common German(ic) cultural and linguistic roots was a conscious act of civil disobedience against the various autocratic rulers in the forty-one larger and smaller independent countries and princedoms in post-1815 'Germany', most of whom staunchly opposed German unification as well as the political reforms and civil liberties Britain offered its middle class. Numerous professors at German-speaking universities were members of the quickly growing and increasingly well-educated middle class, including Jacob Grimm, who supported the creation of a Pan-German state under the leadership of Austria by providing foundational unifying German(ic) traits through his scholarship in linguistics (*Deutsche Grammatik*, 1819), lexicography (*Deutsches Wörterbuch*, 1854), editing (*Die Lieder der alten Edda*), and mythology (*Deutsche Mythologie*, 1835). What connected him with his British counterparts was the enthusiasm and public motivation for his work. Instead of forcing narrow modernist editorial paradigms on his medieval sources, a methodology he dismissed as investigating 'subject matter for the sake of words' ('Wortphilologie'), he favoured the investigation 'of words for the sake of subject matter' (Sachphilologie).⁷ His goal was an aesthetically conscious, socially bold, and nationally daring scholarship that would defend original manuscript versions as unique historical artefacts and avoid degrading medieval sources to mere quarries for consolidating linguistic rules.

However, Jacob Grimm's enthusiastic and broad scholarship, linked as it was to the romantic desire for a unified Germany based on a common medieval Germanity, was stymied by the failed liberal 'March Revolution' of 1848. The members of the professoriate, who were among the most ardent supporters of a freely elected national assembly and freedom of the press for a new Germany, were demoralised and gave up on their more radically democratic goals. Some were also afraid that the lower social classes might demand more radical change than they, as members of the bourgeoisie, were prepared to embrace. As a consequence, many German professors abandoned politically risky research and embraced positivistic and science-like methodologies. According to Jost Hermand, 'audacious thoughts, political perspectives or social reform are no longer in the foreground' for the majority of German scholars of the Middle Ages 'but a sedulous collecting of tiny and tiniest pieces to build an imposing tower of mere facts which was furnished with everything except an idealistic structural frame'.⁸

Philologisation

Since the eighteenth century, German and other scholars in Classical studies had continued the long Western tradition of curating historical texts, and

they had used the term ‘philology’ to describe their various efforts. Originally a broadly conceived practice similar to cultural studies and open to academic and non-academic participation, philology had narrowed considerably in scope and methodology by the time national languages and literatures began to be studied at the modern university. After 1848, the following features became increasingly prominent:

- 1) Modern scholars and editors, influenced by modern copyright laws for artistic and creative activities and by the romantic cult of individual genial authorship, were obsessed with establishing clarity about the origins of medieval texts. This led to a preference for texts by authors for whom there was a biographical record (e.g. Giovanni Boccaccio’s *Decameron*, c. 1353; Geoffrey Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales*, late fourteenth century; Hildegard von Bingen’s *Order of the Virtues*, c. 1151) and disregard for many anonymous ones, especially medieval romances, which were mined for their linguistic features but thought to be lacking any aesthetic value. Decades of research were dedicated to searching the authors of national narratives (e.g. the Middle High German *Nibelungenlied*), and some anonymous authors were even given a name based on a medieval text so that scholars could attribute features of the text to an ‘author-person’ (e.g. *Pearl Poet*, *Gawain Poet*).
- 2) If notions of modern authorship dominated the way in which modern scholars approached medieval texts, medieval textual production and the central role of manuscript culture within that production had to be relegated to the margins of scholarly reflection. As a consequence, the medieval scribe, a pesky interloper between a medieval ‘author’s’ intentions and their post-medieval readers, became a favourite scapegoat in nineteenth-century studies. Medieval scribes, who had failed to produce ‘correct’ copies, were blamed for the continued deterioration of the elusive original version of a text (the archetype) and for introducing troubling uncertainty and increasing variance (in dialect, spelling, structure) into the reception history. The impression of having to rectify a decadent process through meticulous comparatist reconstruction came to govern scholarly practice. The otherness of medieval textual production had to be repaired by modern positivist methodology. Rather than viewing each manuscript version as a unique and valuable historical artefact, scholars postulated that only editions comparing all existing manuscript versions of a text could repair the damage done by medieval scribes and copyists.
- 3) Eager to correct the adulterated versions of an unknown medieval original, scholars redefined ‘philology’ from a concept of broad cultural investigation into science-like practice of textual editing that emulated

scientific methods as closely as possible. Postulating the existence of an archetype for every medieval manuscript, they visualised textual history via a genealogical family tree (*stemma codicum*) within which each text had a specific place and degree of filiation in relation to the archetype. If this practice was followed comprehensively, or so philologists claimed, it was even possible to reconstruct the lost archetype. The auxiliary practices necessary to render philological work of this kind successfully included the study of critical bibliography, etymology, grammar, motif and source study, phonology, prosody, and syntax, all scientific or at least science-like efforts meant to guarantee, to a degree now inconceivable, a philosophy of complete positivistic accuracy, comprehensive coverage, and unqualified right and wrong. In 1919, Eduard Sievers (1850–1932), one of the doyens of German textual and linguistic scholarship, accepted a challenge by his colleague, Hans Lietzmann (1875–1942), to provide a linguistic analysis of a yet unedited and unseen historical text to determine how many authors had composed it. He and one of his students, Wolfgang Schanze, had used this method to reveal multiple authors for St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians. They got Lietzmann's intentionally concocted specimen completely wrong, but neither party disputed the basic methodological feasibility of the challenge.⁹

Scholars in many countries welcomed and adopted similar science-like approaches to medieval culture and considered 'philology' simply as an effective innovative practice meant to assist them with the confusing features of manuscript culture. Already by 1860, the reputation of German-speaking scholars in this new science of literature and language was such that private enthusiasts and autodidacts in Britain were eager to provide them with access to Old and Middle English manuscripts to see them properly edited and published. Frederick James Furnivall (1825–1910), for example, a polymath with an education in mathematics and law and a passion for social(ist) reform, was fascinated by the strict application of scientific methodologies in the humanities. He played a major role in the Philological Society's major lexicographic project of the *New English Dictionary* (which would become the *Oxford English Dictionary*), and founded the Early English Text Society (1864), the Chaucer Society (1868), and the Wyclif Society (1881). Entrepreneurial like few others of his generation, he included a host of students at London's Working Men's College and other non-academic volunteers (among them Eleanor Marx, daughter of Karl Marx) in the editorial work necessary to bring together entire manuscript traditions into unified modern editions of a medieval text. Although he had misgivings about the low speed of the 'doctored' editions curated by those with philological training and degrees,

he also had a deep appreciation for the meticulous scientific work his mostly German collaborators brought to his publishing ventures. He facilitated access to British private and public library holdings for dozens of German guest scholars and their graduate students, and edited himself thirty-nine of the volumes for the Early English Text Society, including the works of John Hoccleve, the Digby Plays, and the *Six-Print of Chaucer's Canterbury Tales*.¹⁰ Furnivall, whose extensive work spanned the entire time period during which the study of medieval culture passed from the hands of private amateurs into those of university-educated specialists, was praised for his hospitality, bridge-building, and enthusiastic publishing initiatives. German scholars even dedicated their monographs to him, and the University of Berlin recognised him with an honorary doctorate. However, his German collaborators refrained from calling him a 'philologist'.

Philology as national virtue

In 1878, when entering his name and profession on the police records in Heidelberg, Germany, travelling writer Mark Twain called himself a 'Philologist & artist'.¹¹ In the same year, James Morgan Hart, who would become an influential voice in shaping graduate study at US research universities based on German practices, explained to his American readers that 'the celerity with which innovating ideas spread in Germany' was due to the country's advanced educational system which, in the humanities, closely linked practitioners and high school teachers with cutting-edge philological scholarship at the universities.¹² Like so many other visitors to Germany, Twain and Hart recognised the central importance of philology for the fabric of late nineteenth-century German society. By the time they visited Germany, philology had evolved from a politically inoffensive intellectual practice championed by German scholars after the failed 1848 revolution to an actively state-supported public virtue in a Germany recently united under Prussian leadership in the aftermath of the Franco-German War of 1870–1871. Easily aligned with other presumed Prussian-German virtues like hard work and diligence, the scientific study of historical language and literature, which most non-German scholars would have thought of as a denationalising or downright international area of specialisation, became a national German virtue due to the specific political and sociological context in which it evolved. As part of the Imperial government's strategy to make Germany the world's leader in research and higher education, Germany's scholars in medieval philology were now able to follow safely scientific paradigms and, at the same time, felt good about playing a vital role in their country's rise to prominence. Since 'Germanity' was now considered a

prerequisite for being a true philologist, Frederick James Furnivall and other international scholars did not qualify to receive that essential designation.

By the 1870s, during the final phase of rampant competition among the great European colonial powers for political and economic hegemony in Europe and beyond, scholarship on the Middle Ages was becoming more and more a parallel territory for nationalist conflict. In 1872, for example, Otto von Bismarck, chancellor of the German Empire, took a personal interest in the appointment of Bernhard ten Brink, a Chaucer and Beowulf specialist, as the first chair of English Philology at the Imperial University (*Reichsuniversität*) of Strassburg. Since English Philology was considered a subset of German(ic) Philology, instituting this new subject at the formerly French university was considered part of the government's cultural policy to 'Germanise' the recently annexed region of Alsace-Lorraine. In 1896, when Frederick Furnivall learnt about the 'Kruger telegram', a message from Emperor Wilhelm II of Germany to President Paul Kruger, of the South African Republic (Transvaal), congratulating him on repelling 'Jameson's Raid', a British attack launched from the Cape Colony, he refused, over a period of 13 years, to nominate any German colleagues as officers in the Early English Text Society.

As a usable scholarly paradigm in the service of nationalism, German philology was particularly aggressive about English and French medieval texts. While the post-1871 German military and businesses hastened to colonise territories around the world (Cameroon, German South West Africa, Kiautschou Bay, Marshall Islands, Togoland, etc.) and (re-)appropriate regions in Europe (Alsace-Lorraine), German philologists found that the various linguistic and historical connections with Britain made annexing the *corpora* of Anglo-Saxon and Middle English manuscripts a particularly rewarding target. The processes of exploring, uncovering, transcribing, and editing sources in the British libraries resembled and happened coevally with the hoisting of the German flag on yet unclaimed lands. Being first in the editorial process not only inscribed the individual scholar's name onto the bodies of these texts and provided lasting fame, it also lessened the advantage 'native' scholars had for their work through their direct and easy access to the manuscripts. As soon as such a critical edition became available, German scholars could work with it in Berlin, Marburg, or Tübingen instead of London and Paris and use it as the foundation for the other branches of philological endeavour. Moreover, since the edition had been created according to their preferred practices, they were in a position to monitor the methodologies, the critical terminology, and, thus, the discursive acceptability of all later editorial and interpretive efforts.

Ahead of the universities in most other countries by 15–20 years, German institutions, with ample state support, founded research-focused departments and graduate programmes and quickly established an entire infrastructure of journals, book series, and organisations. German philologists in their various disciplines critically reviewed all forthcoming publications, praising ‘philological’ readings as industrious, thorough, and sound, and othering extra-discursive aesthetic, artistic, sociological, and psychological perspectives as dilettantish and unacademic. By the early 1890s, the hegemony of German philology in medieval studies had British and American academics concede that ‘a scientific study of English philology and literature is absolutely impossible without a knowledge of German’ and regard the German university as ‘perhaps the most efficient of all very complex human institutions’.¹³ German philological expertise garnered an extremely high market value and, as other nations tried to emulate Germany’s educational policies, became a sought-after export commodity, as when Karl Breul (Berlin) moved to the University of Cambridge (UK) in 1884, Ewald Flügel (Leipzig) to Stanford University (USA), in 1892, and Karl Bülbring (Heidelberg) to the University of Groningen (Netherlands), in 1893.

There were also voices critical of Germany’s intellectual expansionism, and they too often conflated national with methodological concerns. Phonetician Henry Sweet (1845–1910), for example, complained that the historical study of English ‘was being rapidly annexed by the Germans’ and that British scholars had to resign themselves ‘to the more humble role of purveyors to the swarms of young programme-mongers turned out every year by the German universities, so thoroughly trained in all the mechanical details of “parasite philology” that no English dilettante can hope to compete with them – except by Germanising himself and losing all hope of his nationality’.¹⁴ Similarly, Chaucer scholar Walter W. Skeat (1835–1912) remarked sarcastically that not being German, but ‘merely a native of London, in which city Chaucer himself was born’, might disqualify him from doing scholarship on the father of English poetry. Led by Václav Fortunát Durych, Josef Dobrovský, and Josef Jungmann, nineteenth-century Bohemian / Czech academics also sought to free themselves from a dominant Germanity within the Hapsburg Empire by opposing German philological paradigms and anchoring their own independent and particularist linguistic and cultural roots in the Middle Ages.¹⁵

Closer to World War I, French scholar Joseph Bédier (1864–1938) delivered the most incisive and influential critique of the centrepiece of German science-like philology, the genealogical tree model of manuscript affiliation. In his 1913 introduction to Jean Renart’s *Le Lai de l’ombre*, he exposed the tree model, which was little more than a mechanistic adaptation of Charles

Darwin's evolutionary models to the history of textual study, as an anachronistic (modern) misunderstanding of medieval manuscript culture. Instead, Bédier suggested selecting a single best version from a number of imperfect copies of a manuscript tradition (in the absence of the author's autograph), and to edit that version to the best of a scholar's abilities. While Bédier's critique of the mechanistic German editorial paradigm was highly astute, it too was in a large part motivated by his own peculiar mix of 'nationalist medievalism and creole patriotism' which made him reveal 'national purity, historical continuity, and the singularity of France' in all his work on French medieval literature, especially the heroic *Song of Roland*.¹⁶

Philology's sister disciplines

While the role of philology at the modern university makes it a particularly fascinating paradigm to observe, philology evolved in a context during which its sister disciplines, similarly, experimented with various science-like methods to shed light on the Middle Ages. Academic art historians, for example, strained to distinguish their work on medieval structures by minimising the kind of impressionistic subjectivity that characterised the observations made by travel antiquarians, who dominated the discourse about historical monuments in the eighteenth and early nineteenth century. Thus, if Charles Nodier (*Voyages Pittoresques*, 1820) or Thomas Frognall Dibdin (*A Bibliographical, Antiquarian and Picturesque Tour in France and Germany*, 1821) turned their visits into a lived experience that included their personal histories and particular circumstances of observation (weather, traffic, time of day, etc.), Eugène Viollet-le-Duc (*Dictionnaire raisonné de l'architecture française du XI^e au XVI^e siècle*, 1854–1868) eliminated these elements to establish compendious scientific classifications of medieval buildings and their artistic and architectural elements. While the romantic and gentlemanly amateurs were not shy about expressing their nationalist tempers, the necessity for scientific positivism led to a marked decrease in open nationalist sentiment (and sentiment in general) among academic specialists.¹⁷

The new class of nineteenth-century professional historians generally followed a similar pattern, exteriorising their amateur predecessors' views as irresponsibly presentist and mandating that scholars write objective and distanced historical research based on strict source study and applied to a time period too radically different to be comprehensible or directly relevant to modern readers. These transnational positivist objectives did, however, not prevent nineteenth- and early twentieth-century historians from reading medieval history according to their own national political realities (a multi-ethnic Austria–Hungary; an Italy equally linked to its Classical Roman and

medieval heritage; or a France whose post-1789 identity depended on an obscurantist idea of the Middle Ages), resulting in a complex network of often contradictory master narratives, a veritable tangle of historical and cultural visions of the past which Michael Werner and Bénédicte Zimmerman have aptly termed '*histoire croisée*'.¹⁸ Many of these foundational master narratives, enshrined by specific national terminologies and traditions, still continue to inform contemporary historicist scholarship. Because historicist medievalism was not considered the dominion of any single national scholarly tradition, however, it did not suffer philology's fate.

Philology's demise

In 1928, in a review of a philological investigation into the functions of the narrator in Chaucer's epic poetry, Franz de Backer remarks that he 'did not believe that there could ever be a scholar sufficiently courageous to do this sort of thing. We suppose, however, that science is helped by it. For, after all, that gives us the conclusion, – no, the proof mathematical, – that, generally speaking, the narrator interferes somewhat more in Chaucer's works than in those of his models and predecessors'.¹⁹ The reviewer's tongue-in-cheek compliment about this kind of philological study expresses the general disaffection scholars in the humanities feel towards an academic paradigm that has outlived its historical moment. When he further recommends that philologists should concentrate less on 'merely external facts' and more on 'the psychological and literary elements', devote less of their 'astounding diligence' and 'great gravity' to 'mere trifles', he reveals how much philology's early twentieth-century representatives had diminished Jacob Grimm's joyously comparative and innovative concept into a rigid and unambitious practice. As such, as well as in its role as a national German virtue, it became an easy target for complete eradication after the explosion of nationalist emotion in the Great War. Focusing on philology's exclusion of studying medieval and early modern literature 'as an art, a means of creative expression, a record of human experience', Sir Henry Newbolt, a jingoistic poet, novelist, historian and influential advisor to the British government set out 'to purge English studies of its Germanisms, that is, its scientific leanings, and to forge it into a tool to further national unity'.²⁰ As in the early nineteenth century, the continuist and presentist aspects of the medieval and early modern past were once again conjoined with a strong nationalist and nostalgic flavour, and despite J. R. R. Tolkien's reasonable assertion that 'the philological instinct' was in fact not something 'the late war was fought to end', but 'as universal as is the use of language'.²¹ Nevertheless, the term and practice disappeared from Anglo-American general usage by the end of

World War II, surviving only in the titles of academic journals (*Journal of English and Germanic Philology* (1897); *Philological Quarterly* (1922)) founded to compete with the likes of *Zeitschrift für romanische Philologie* (1877) or *Anglia: Zeitschrift für Englische Philologie* (1878) and in the US Library of Congress catalogue system which continues to categorise all publications in literature and language study, including fiction and poetry, under the letter 'P'. In most continental European countries, including Germany, the term still describes academic departments, colleges, and degree programmes, but only as a historical signifier which encompasses a wide range of literary and linguistic study.

New World nationalisms

While Old World nations and their scholars fought wars of military and intellectual attrition and weakened themselves considerably in the process, the United States expanded its role as the new world leader in military, economic, and scholarly matters. More often than not, the geographical and cultural distance to European subjects of investigation enabled American scholars to focus attention away from rather nonsensical nationalist altercations about Charlemagne's essential 'Frenchness' or 'Germanity' or Geoffrey Chaucer's or John Gower's potential preference for Romance (French) over German(ic) vocabulary and values. More often than not, they chose a middle ground between science-like approaches, on the one hand, and humanistic and presentist responses, on the other. For example, after English, German, and Scottish scholars obsessed for more than 30 years about the Englishness or Scottishness of the late medieval romance *Thomas of Erceeldoune*, an American doctoral student, Josephine Burnham, deftly dismissed the dispute, commenting that the text's language 'might be that of a northern Englishman just as well as of a Scotchman', and proceeded to study some of the features heretofore left untouched because of the deep desire to claim the text for a specific region or national research paradigm.²²

The ability to pick and choose from among existing Old World scholarly paradigms for reading medieval texts and rise above the war-like nationalist traditions attached to many of them provided American medievalists with a unique opportunity for a transnational study of the Middle Ages. However, as the United States gradually grew into a world power, and English became the global lingua franca, the country and its academics performed some of the same colonialist moves their German counterparts performed in the late nineteenth century. Individuals and university libraries and museums purchased thousands of medieval manuscripts from impoverished European owners (for example: railroad magnate Henry E. Huntingdon bought the

Ellesmere manuscript of the *Canterbury Tales* for \$1 million in 1917), rendering manuscript research possible on US soil. Moreover, medievalists quickly created an impressive infrastructure of societies (Medieval Academy of America, 1925–), journals, conferences, book series, textbooks, and awards which, because of a superior number of members, institutions, and funding, soon outpaced European scholarly production. By the middle of the twentieth century, American scholars such as Albert C. Baugh felt confident enough to claim, ‘in no unworthy spirit of self esteem’, that while ‘[i]n Germany Chaucer studies never really flourished . . . the bulk of scholarly work [. . .] done on Chaucer in the last fifty years and the most significant achievements in this field of literary study have come from American scholars’.²³ Similar to Renaissance humanists’ demarcation against the allegedly dark (middle) age that preceded them, American medievalists not only declared independence from their European colleagues but often even attempted to efface or at least outdo these colleagues’ achievements. As Candace Barrington shows in her contribution to this volume, Manhattan’s nineteenth- and twentieth-century Gothic-style structures, while invoking continuity with Europe’s medieval past, represent the same spirit. The buildings proudly proclaim the triumph of New World capitalism, modern building techniques, and steel construction over their Old World origins.

Medieval studies vs. medievalism

American medievalists’ unmistakable national pride in their post-European methods and achievements demonstrates that Hannah Arendt’s justified suspicions about the possibility or desirability of a never-ending progress in modern research and scholarship may need extending to what she saw as the more liberal and inclusive ideal exemplified by twentieth-century academic work in the United States. Just as the supposedly dispassionate philological scholarship practised in Germany between 1848 and 1945 was imbricated with national desire, so American medieval studies is not at all free from seeing its own vision of representative openness, meant to overcome Old World barriers of nationality, language, and ethnicity, as a national virtue and natural guarantor of intellectual superiority. Interestingly, both practices share the notion that the academic study of the Middle Ages, generally referred to as ‘Medieval Studies’ (German: *Mediävistik*), is epistemologically superior to all other cultural forms of receiving the past. This is why, concurrently with the academisation and institutionalisation of medieval studies at English-speaking universities, the term ‘medievalism’ was designated to describe non-academic, popular, and thus unreliable or anachronistic forms of encountering and experiencing the Middle Ages, including medievalist

fiction, film, gaming, performance, re-enactment, and ritual. Based on the strong nationalist streak which colours so much of the modern academic reception of medieval culture, however, it seems that the academic field of 'medieval studies' has very little epistemological standing to look down on 'medievalism' as its eternal presentist and unscientific 'other', its traumatic continuist 'exteriority'.²⁴ In fact, it seems that the mid-nineteenth-century concept of 'medievalism', understood as the ongoing 'process of creating the Middle Ages', includes academic 'medieval studies', which is only one of the many creative ways in which human beings have tried to bridge the temporal chasm between themselves and the medieval past.²⁵

NOTES

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3. Monica Santini, *The Impetus of Amateur Scholarship. Discussing and Editing Medieval Romances in Late-Eighteenth and Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Bern: Lang, 2010), pp. 15–28, provides a survey of these and other terms.
4. Leslie J. Workman, 'Speaking of Medievalism: An Interview with Leslie J. Workman', in *Medievalism in the Modern World. Essays in Honour of Leslie Workman*, ed. Richard Utz and Tom Shippey (Turnhout: Brepols, 1998), 433–449, here 439, explains that 'Medievalism, in origin and for the first hundred years' was 'an English phenomenon'.
5. *Reflections on the Revolution in France* [1790] (London: Apollo, 1814), p. 32.
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 16. Michelle Warren, *Creole Medievalism: Colonial France and Joseph Bédier's Middle Ages* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), p. 125.
 17. Klaus Niehr, 'Patterns of Behaviour: Architectural Representation in the Romantic Period', and Stephanie Moore Glaser, 'Frozen Music and Symphonies in Stone. Gothic Architecture and the Musical Analogy: Intersecting Trajectories in German and French Thought from the Eighteenth through the Nineteenth Centuries', both forthcoming in *The Idea of the Medieval Cathedral*, ed. Stephanie Moore Glaser (Turnhout: Brepols, 2016).
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Medievalism and the ideology of war

War lies at the heart of contemporary medievalism. An Internet image search under 'medieval' lists 'Medieval Castles', 'Knight' and 'Weapons' as the first three sub-categories; 150 of the first 250 images displayed are war-related. In some ways this should not be surprising. Unlike some other features of 'medieval' life retrospectively invented, wars were real and widespread. Although the practice and form of warfare changed markedly in the later Middle Ages and have changed even more since then, the ideology of war has persisted with much less change. War's continuing presence, in reality and imagination, has linked modernity closely to the Middle Ages. The long literary and textual record that bears witness to that connection is my main subject here, alongside reference to the modern history of medievalist war propaganda, memorial and re-inventive disguise.

If 'medieval' wars are real, so are 'Renaissance' wars, 'Reformation' wars, 'Enlightenment' wars and 'modern' wars generally, and yet, as those terms indicate, the post-medieval is not as strongly identified with war and fighting as the Middle Ages are. Because the modern successfully styled itself as progress in humane learning, religion, science and political institutions, many imaginations of it are strangely dissociated from the history of war and colonial conquest. An early modern battle will primarily be understood as, for instance, part of the Wars of Religion or the English Civil War, not as typifying the 'early modern', let alone the 'Renaissance', in the way that a twelfth-century Crusade or a battle in the Hundred Years' War seems to typify the 'medieval'. Even the Great War does not define 'modernity' as fully, and was itself heavily disguised with medievalist symbolism: '... [t]he Middle Ages and World War I were inextricably linked by the enduring power of chivalry to symbolize both prowess and principle in warfare'.¹ Conversely, recent military atrocities are readily described as 'almost medieval' rather than by reference to any other era, especially our own; '*almost medieval*' suggests a pitch of barbarism that modernity can never quite reach,

and a protective view of modernity in which war horror is anomalous because it belongs properly to the medieval past.²

Traditionally, modern identification of the 'medieval' with war has been compatible with and strengthened by its familiar guise as 'The Age of Faith', and even more by the implications of both 'The Dark Ages' and 'The Age of Chivalry'. In the process, historical specificities have been collapsed into a broad thematic repertoire, so that 'medieval' has become a loose category of moral and aesthetic suggestion 'remarkably resistant to scrupulous historical representation', as Louise D'Arcens argues in the Introduction to this book. Unlike 'modernity', which is usually read in terms of continuing change and development, the medieval is misleadingly credited with the stability and cohesion of an 'age', and so becomes a notional entity whose meaning can be shown emblematically and reductively by a knight, a castle or a sword. As one consequence of that, the imaginary of war has determined the meaning of the Middle Ages for later times to an extent unequalled in modern cultural memory of other periods. Nevertheless, as some of the following analyses will show, that imaginative tradition is deeply fractured. Modern notions of the Middle Ages engage with a generalised idea of the 'medieval' as violence, and of violence itself as 'medieval', but also, and even simultaneously, with more positive ideas of martial heroism and masculine warrior identity.

The very term 'medieval' retells a story of western Europe's decline into barbarism after the fall of Rome and its later rebirth – culturally through the rediscovery of classical learning, and politically through the slow growth of the modern nation-state towards its flowering in the sixteenth century. As Bruce Holsinger shows in this volume, political developments in the Middle Ages have sometimes been more positively regarded as pioneers of modernity, in a way intended to provide a sense of legitimate continuity to a present-day world in which progressive medieval tendencies can be seen as fulfilled through later technological advances. Yet the return of the medieval is still a commonplace dystopian theme, and sometimes specifically a threat that contemporary war technologies will send an enemy 'back to the Middle Ages'. It is argued that both Christian fundamentalists and radical Islamists wish to 'drag us back into medieval times. Islamists have never left them – except of course in freely using today's technology to further their aims'.³ In these contexts, however irrationally and inaccurately, 'back to the Middle Ages' both draws on and reinforces an existing imaginative association between modern military devastation and the medieval scene.⁴

Humanist, Reformation and Enlightenment critiques of the medieval have had effects lasting into our own times. On varying grounds, they have emphasised the 'darkness' (ignorance, superstition and barbarism) of the Middle Ages, and especially of Roman Catholicism, the 'old religion'

considered 'hostile to the beauty of pagan antiquity', as John Ganim's chapter in this volume puts it. Mike Rodman Jones's shows that individual early modern creative responses to aspects of medieval culture severely complicate and qualify this generally negative picture of reception and cultural retrospect. And yet, it was still powerful and persistent: one can point to Philip Sidney's double-take on *Troilus and Criseyde*, noting the poem's excellence yet still marvelling 'that he [Chaucer] in that misty time could see so clearly . . . [and] that we in this clear age walk so stumblingly after him'.⁵ Sidney's ideological timeline of religious and artistic enlightenment resists interference from his perceptions as a poet. For many 'enlightened' thinkers of all persuasions, both early religious reformers and intellectuals looking back from the Enlightenment period itself, continued adherence to the medieval past meant the suppression of new or true knowledge by blinkered religion. Nadia Altschul's chapter illustrates that attitude with reference to the Abbé Raynal's view from 1770 that early modern Spanish colonialism in America put the new world 'under an even darker medieval age of ignorance and barbarism'.

Against this background, the military traditions of the Middle Ages, especially the national glory won by its war leaders and the honour codes of its elite soldiers, were probably regarded more positively, or at least more positively emphasised in retrospect than would have occurred had there been a more appreciative attitude towards other aspects of medieval thought, art and culture. In the imagined 'field' of war, there is an approved continuity that survives cultural difference: Sidney's own famous death as a Protestant *preux chevalier* fighting Catholic Spain is a good example. And so, in strange conjunction with the modern view of war as the sign of medieval barbarism, war has also often provided the most acceptable face of the medieval past, through hero-warriors from Roland to Henry V. It might even be claimed that when medieval wars have been tolerated it has been mainly for the sake of the warrior's image, and that medievalist reference has been most often valued for the symbolic transformation of the combatant that its ambience can effect.

One has only to visit the sumptuous Royal Armoury in Madrid or a military temple like Edinburgh Castle to see how deeply war has remained invested into modern times with medievalist ideas of nobility, masculinity and magnificence. War continued long beyond the Middle Ages to provide the main currency of manhood and secular heroism, a point on which chroniclers and romancers were in agreement with Aristotle. As late as 1778 Samuel Johnson could say, 'Every man thinks meanly of himself for not having been a soldier . . . the impression is universal. Yet it is strange.'⁶ In moral poetry, Johnson treated the subject differently, but his private

comment suggests that war was as much the proof of manhood in the 'Age of Reason' as in the 'Age of Chivalry'. Accordingly, the rekindled eighteenth-century interest in medieval knighthood did not import new concerns so much as provide a new theatre for existing ones. The rise of the bourgeois novel had presented new types of heroism, as in Samuel Richardson's *Sir Charles Grandison* (1753), whose protagonist opposes duelling on moral and rational grounds. Yet he still has perfect command of a sword and is made to prove his courage in many encounters. Medieval manners might be thought to need translation into modern style, but the chivalric texts that appeared in new editions from the later eighteenth century onward were very relevant to current concerns with masculinity, gentility and sociability. The romances upheld a code that allowed men to assert shared 'gentle' values independently of military or political allegiance; respect for one's own 'faith' and 'word' ideally inspired respect for one's opponent's, while providing a mutual reassurance of class status. The influential novels of Walter Scott (1771–1832) repeatedly celebrate such moments of private virtue. Although the 'Gothic Revival' of the eighteenth century has been attributed to a reaction against Enlightenment rationalism and to the assertion of middle-class vernacular taste against aristocratic neo-Classicism, it engaged many of the same anxieties about class and gender that are observable in the bourgeois novel. Debate about the true nature of courage and gentility is just as prominent in the near-contemporary civilian setting of Scott's *Redgauntlet* (1824) as in his medievalist works.

The nascent Romantic Movement in poetry also gave a new high status to medieval war. In the bardic inventions of James Macpherson ('Ossian') (1765), which made some use of actual Gaelic ballads, medievalist battle descriptions are as prevalent as stormy weather, and a core element of the heroic:

The foes met by Turthor's stream. They heaved like ridgy waves. Their echoing strokes are mixed. Shadowy death flies over the hosts. They were clouds of hail. with squally winds in their skirts. Their showers are roaring together. Below them swells the dark-rolling deep.⁷

'Ossian' enjoyed a huge European success. Although other European cultural traditions, such as the Neo classical, had their own versions of heroic war – Macpherson was also influenced by theories of epic based on Homer – he gave his heroes a new elemental wildness that was found very appealing: 'Now I behold the chiefs, in the pride of their former deeds! Their souls are kindled at the battles of old; at the actions of other times. Their eyes are flames of fire.'⁸ 'Ossian' is also provided with extensive notes and cross-referencing explanations. Macpherson creates the impression that all he

‘translates’, though oblique in its expression, is actually connected as part of an all-embracing grand narrative, a ‘world’ in itself if one knows how to read the signs. That impression of meaningful wholeness and continuity behind apparently random appearances has been another significant part of medievalism’s appeal to modernity, and finds contemporary examples in both the ever expanding text-world of J. R. R. Tolkien and his successors and the all-explaining ‘code’ of Dan Brown’s *The Da Vinci Code*, which draws on modern Holy Grail cults. Medievalist war participates in this discourse of completeness mainly through its recruitment to support supposed age-old and elemental antinomies of light and dark, good and evil, pure and polluted – the basis of most popular genre fantasy fiction and film. The heroic mythopoeia of Romantic medievalism will die very hard, if it ever does. Through its continuing influence, the ‘medieval’ is called on more than any other imaginary period to provide not only the accoutrements and style of a particular era but a timeless theatre for staging eternal and archetypal struggles, as Tolkien saw it: ‘in a little circle of light about their halls men with courage as their stay went forward to that battle with the hostile world and the offspring of the dark’.⁹ For this reason, among others, it seems quite appropriate to call the novels of many genre fantasy writers ‘medievalist’ even when they are set far in the future or some alternate world.

After the Romantic revival of the later eighteenth century, a cultural tension arose between two views of medieval war and knighthood, one idealising deeds of arms as a mark of heroism and defence of right, the other lamenting war’s sad results and promoting a counter agenda of social utility. Scott’s *Ivanhoe* (1820), set in the 1190s, stages such a debate between two young people. On one side is the conventional Christian hero, Wilfred, an enthusiast for chivalry: ‘Nobility were but an empty name without her, and liberty finds the best protection in her lance and her sword.’¹⁰ Opposing him is the novel’s dominant character, the Jewish Rebecca, who criticises ‘the fantastic chivalry of the Nazarenes’¹¹ and invokes a higher version of courage and self-dedication. Scott’s interest in knighthood is critically selective; he sympathises with *Ivanhoe*’s chivalric protection of Rebecca, who is accused of witchcraft, but makes it clear that she deserves a proper court hearing on the evidence, not the risks of a medieval trial by combat based on assertion and superstition. Scott signals the growing preference for professionalised military and judicial efficacy over earlier ideas of noble right and duty; he finally judges Richard the Lionheart harshly ‘in the brilliant, but useless, character of a knight of romance’, although even Rebecca has earlier called him ‘fearful, yet magnificent’.¹²

For many others as well as Scott, attitudes to the Middle Ages, and particularly to the medieval warrior, have helped to define a view of the present and of

the aspirations of modernity. In the field of popular historiography, medieval wars have long functioned as a test of core values. For Oliver Goldsmith, writing in 1764, English history is principally about the slow cultivation of 'polite' society and the rise of the constitution, 'the human animal, by degrees, divesting himself of his native ferocity, and acquiring the arts of happiness and peace'.¹³ In such a view, medieval wars have no interest in themselves and are judged only by whether they inhibit or (more rarely) assist those long-range developments. To Goldsmith, Alfred the Great's victories over the Danes are significant because after them 'the whole nation seems to emerge into a greater degree of politeness than it had before enjoyed'.¹⁴ For Charles Dickens, by contrast, writing in 1851–1853, Alfred's 'mighty heart' in war and peace defined 'the English Saxon character' and the spirit of Empire: 'Wheresoever that race goes, there, law, and industry, and safety for life and property, and all the great results of steady perseverance, are certain to arise.'¹⁵ Dickens does not specify exactly whose lives and property are rendered safe by the 'Saxon blood'. His praise for Alfred manages a seamless conjunction of valour in war, peace and prosperity at home, and colonial acquisitions abroad. The complete goodness of Alfred, imparted to all his 'race', functions as a denial that English imperial ventures can have any legitimate opposition. John Ruskin, deliberately adopting an internationalist perspective to counter Anglo-centric (and xenophobic) accounts like Dickens's, chooses Clovis, the conquering Christian king of the Franks, not Alfred, as his type of the Dark Age warrior. Since God is the inscrutable main cause of history in Ruskin's view, neither Clovis nor his race needs heroic status. Clovis is in himself a repellent character:

His natural gratitude to the Delivering Power, and pride in its protection, added only fierceness to his soldiership, and deepened his political enmities with the rancour of religious indignation. No more dangerous snare is set by the fiends for human frailty than the belief that our own enemies are also the enemies of God.¹⁶

Ruskin aims this portrait directly at the contemporary historiography that treated military success as divine endorsement of nation, religion and race. Unsurprisingly, his was a minority view in the heyday of imperialism.

In the context of the quest for national origins and pride, reference to medieval warriors has usually been deeply positive. Virtually every European country has celebrated medieval warrior legends, from Brian Boru (941–1024) in Ireland to Alexander Nevsky (1220–1263) in Russia, idolised in a 1938 film by Sergei Eisenstein which is both a modern *chanson de geste* and an encomium of Stalin's leadership represented as 'tough love' for the people. The Nazi 'Third Reich' counted the Holy Roman Empire of Otto I (912–973) as the 'First Reich'. Both colonisers and colonial settler societies found

interest in upholding positive views of the free (and free-booting) medieval warriors of the North. For Americans,

the Vinland voyages provided a myth of national foundation by a Teutonic hero who predated Columbus by some 500 years. Leif Eriksson could thus be claimed the true (and proto-Protestant) 'discoverer' of America and the Viking presence as a direct link with ancient ideals of 'Gothic' liberty.¹⁷

Local ethnologists and visitors alike referred to '[t]he South Seas with their lovable graceful fierysouled Viking Islander races' and saw Maori New Zealanders as heroic 'proto-Europeans', 'the old Polynesian Vikings'.¹⁸ In Australia, where the colonisers' uncomprehending hostility towards the culture of indigenous societies prevented any identification of them with European historical models, medievalist war reference still expressed settler solidarity with European tradition and helped to 'naturalize . . . dispossession of indigenous lands, and their subjugation of indigenous people'.¹⁹

The dominant interpreter of medieval war to Britain and her former colonies, and to the world at large, is William Shakespeare. Although he has often served as a rallying point of Britishness, Shakespeare's military medievalism is often both ambivalent in effect and carefully slanted in later presentations. *Henry V* (c.1599), set in 1415, describes its hero as 'a stem / Of that victorious stock' of Edward III and the Black Prince, with reference to the English victory over the French at Crécy in 1346, forging a national link with England's already distant past. Yet in modern retrospect the credit for victory is selectively distributed. For instance, Laurence Olivier's wartime film of *Henry V* (1944), released in the year of the Allied invasion of Nazi-occupied France, gloats patriotically over French defeat, but its theme of holy victory is closely centred on the secular soldier-king leading the troops; Henry's clerical advisors, two bishops, are shown as effete clowns, excluded from a share in England's glory.

Even for its heroes, Shakespearean chivalry is rarely allowed to stand on firm ground. His revelation of political and psychological self-interest undercuts displays of magnanimity; Prince Hal spares the Douglas at Shrewsbury because

His valour shown upon our crests to-day
Hath taught us how to cherish such high deeds
Even in the bosom of our adversaries. (*Henry IV I*, 5.5)

but in the same play, Hal's commercial determination to make Hotspur 'render every glory up, / Yea, even the slightest worship of his time' (*Henry IV I*, 3.2) shows his competitiveness within the honour economy of war 'deeds'. This 'historical' Shakespearean treatment of medievalist war can be contrasted with the tradition which appropriates the modes of knightly conflict for allegory, best exemplified in *The Faerie Queene* (1590) by Shakespeare's

near-contemporary, Edmund Spenser. In this tradition, opponents and allies in the heroes' combats take on a complex moral significance: the true knight, through divinely given grace, fights as a religious champion against manifestations of evil.

The anxieties of ruling a homeland disrupted by industrial development and a vast colonial empire helped to make English medievalism eventually less Shakespearean (as it is in Scott) and more Spenserian, an imaginative vehicle for moral analysis and psychological introspection. That emphasis is evident in both its positive 'parabolic' versions, like Tennyson's very influential Arthurian *Idylls of the King* (1830s–1880s), and in the mysterious dystopian vision of Robert Browning's 'Childe Roland to the Dark Tower Came' (1855) with its images of a polluted landscape and a corruptly competitive society lacking higher purpose. By and large, nineteenth-century writers are more inclined to adapt the figure of the medieval knight for metaphorical purposes, as the younger Tennyson did in 'Sir Galahad' (1842), than to justify his literal career as beneficial and socially useful. The American classic, *Bulfinch's Mythology* (1859) was typical in commenting that 'we cannot but see reason to congratulate ourselves . . . that the civil magistrate, if less picturesque, has taken the place of the mailed champion'.²⁰ Victorian novels set in the Middle Ages often made war a moral problem. Much of the Victorian and Edwardian direction of medievalist war literature to children hoped to inculcate its 'spirit' rather than its literal content. Divided in their consciousness of the subject between positive symbolism and negative historical analysis, many Victorians and Edwardians wanted the Middle Ages poetically but not otherwise, so that medieval war was doomed to express an ideal aspiration that the dominant view of its past reality would always negate.

Nevertheless, a chief employment of medievalism has been to represent modern wars as the customary exercise of legitimate force against a common enemy, rather than as the use of whatever force is considered necessary to achieve partisan goals. Rare opportunities to assert modern continuity with medieval forms of war have been readily taken, despite, or because of, their misleading nature. The 'last British cavalry charge' at Omdurman (Sudan) in 1898 is marked there by a memorial to 22 men from the 21st Lancers. In Winston Churchill's imaginative account, Omdurman becomes 'the last link in the long chain of those spectacular conflicts whose vivid and majestic splendour has done so much to invest war with glamour'. 'We see what the Crusaders saw.' 'Moreover, the fight was with equal weapons, for the British too fought with sword and lance as in the days of old.'²¹ In actuality, the battle was mainly decided by British Maxim machine-gun fire, which caused an estimated 10,000 deaths in the opposing army, and up to 95 per cent casualties.²² War metaphors have also traditionally been applied to moral

and religious struggles. St Paul repeatedly urged early Christians to ‘fight the good fight’ as ‘soldier[s] of Christ’ (1 Timothy, 1. 18; 2 Timothy 2, 3–4). Contemporary usages like ‘war on poverty’ and ‘fighting cancer’ keep these ‘good war’ thematics alive. The archaic and idealised imagery of medievalist war – the knight with sword and lance rather than the private soldier with rifle and grenades – lends an aura of nobility to the modern that conceals mundane fact and avoids historical scrutiny (see Figure 12).

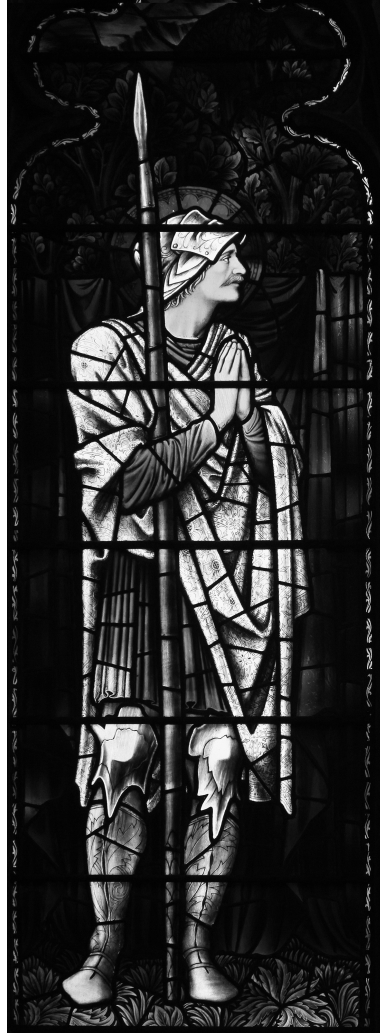


Figure 12 Memorial window to Cecil Faulkner Cawston, Lieutenant 18th Hussars, died 1901, Norwich Cathedral (detail). Photograph © Mike Dixon.

Medievalising wars has been a way to claim for them a share in both secular and spiritual forms of heroism. It helps transmute respect for the courage and suffering of male soldiers (more rarely of women or civilians) into a sense that participation in war is a sacred duty, and it consoles grief by symbolically shifting war deaths onto a higher symbolic plane.

Over the centuries the medievalist war tradition has increasingly fed on itself, creating thematic clusters – the hidden hero; the sword reforged – developing specific warrior brands like ‘Crusaders’, ‘Saxons’ and ‘Vikings’, and re-deploying famous names – ‘Arthur’, ‘El Cid’, ‘Saladin’, ‘Wallace’. These processes concentrate and naturalise the medieval association with war to the point that the Middle Ages can hardly seem themselves without it. There is so much modern war medievalism that any comprehensive discussion is impossible, and so many versions of it, ranging from the sacred to the farcical, that any generalisations are most risky. Perhaps the dominant view of medievalist war today will include a satirical or hostile reaction to the former ‘knight in shining armour’. *Monty Python and the Holy Grail* remains the core popular expression; the Python Terry Jones’s debunking study *Chaucer’s Knight* (1980) is its academic version. Recent medievalist heroics play down the ‘shining’ image – Vigo Mortensen’s admired performance as Aragorn in Peter Jackson’s *The Lord of the Rings* film trilogy is an example. There still remains a default ‘romance’ expectation that medievalist fictions will treat war as a ‘high’ theme, but also an expectation that they will include, in a revisionist strategy, absurd or barbarous images of violence. The direction between past and present in these revisions often remains uncertain in import. Is modernity exposing the nasty (or silly) realities of medieval war in order to break free from romantic delusions, or is the nastiness mainly off-setting the ‘true’ heroes, the right sort of medieval warriors who are permitted to function as honorary moderns? The routine exceptionalism of many twentieth-century and contemporary genre fantasy heroes – established by race, class, sex, age, appearance or occupation – shows a reluctance to endorse the typical male warrior figure of the medieval past, but a continuing need to appropriate his story of struggle and triumph. Democratisation and diversification of the once knightly romance role do not necessarily contest embedded conservative notions of ‘right’ rule according to ancient and established tradition.

There have been notable strategies of resistance to the perceived inauthenticity of military medievalism. Among the most radical is Mark Twain’s *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur’s Court* (1889) – an attempt to dismiss medievalism altogether as a sideshow duping modernity with ‘the sham grandeurs, sham gauds, and sham chivalries of a brainless and worthless long-vanished society’.²³ If Walter Scott’s novels had really reversed the

French Revolution and started the American Civil War, as Twain claimed, obviously the matter was urgent. But Twain is also more unsure than many commentators of his time about the superior claims of the present, especially in relation to war. His hard-headed capitalist ‘Yankee’, Hank Morgan, travels back to King Arthur’s time and ‘bosses’ the Middle Ages out of its ‘sham chivalries’, but in the end only by means of an industrialised mass slaughter of the king and his knights. To Twain, medievalism is a swindle, but modernity has merely professionalised and technologically magnified the barbarism hidden beneath chivalric glamour, and so in its pretensions to progress is an even bigger swindle. Taking a different line again, in G. K. Chesterton’s *The Napoleon of Notting Hill* (1904) an English king whimsically returns the land to ‘medieval’ customs and institutions, and Notting Hill fights to the death for its freedom as an independent borough. Chesterton reverses the long nineteenth-century effort to render medievalist war acceptable through allegory. Instead, his imagined renewal of actual medieval violence (though cast in a very stylised aesthetic form) deprives modernity of its symbolic control of the past. The empty martial symbols of late-Victorian medievalism, once they have been authenticated and animated by real use, are seen to escape tame complicity with the modern. The sword’, claims Chesterton’s hero, is a ‘magic wand’: ‘Whatever is touched with it is never again wholly common.’ [It] make[s] things beautiful.’²⁴ The novel exploits both the symbolic centrality and the historical aberrance of the Victorian imagination of medievalist war. The continuing appeal of the subject to conservative rebels – Charles Kingsley, Chesterton, John Buchan, Tolkien, T. H. White – seems related to its flexible combination of symbolic prestige with the prized status of embattled cultural underdog.

Poetry of the later twentieth century views medievalist war with less expectation that it will either confer an elevating destiny or help to chart a modern progress. In ‘Funeral Music’,²⁵ a set of eight sonnets, Geoffrey Hill meditates in a fragmentary and allusive manner on three fifteenth-century English aristocrats, Suffolk, Worcester and Rivers, who combined advanced humanist culture with violent political careers ending in execution. Hill provides no steady narrator, no stable point of view and no clear way of distinguishing one voice from another. Sonnet 8 begins:

Not as we are but as we must appear,
Contractual ghosts of pity; not as we
Desire life but as they would have us live,
Set apart in timeless colloquy.

It is not certain who the ‘we’ are that speak; is it the dead lords, or perhaps the poet speaking for his audience? Utterances, images and names flicker briefly

in a half-light then are lost again. There are confusing shifts in the scale of vision – one moment a close up on a graphic earthly image (‘Spattering block-straw with human residue’), the next directed to a lofty universal concept like the harmony of the spheres, or to some conflation of each: ‘we are dying / To satisfy fat Caritas, those / Wiped jaws of stone’. Belief attaches only to a sense of ‘abandonment’, and there is no conclusion: ‘Crying unto the end “I have not finished.”’ Radically different from Tennyson, W. B. Yeats and others who gave imagined medievalist war the task of restoring heroic potential to a debased present, ‘this filthy modern tide’,²⁶ Hill makes it the scene of incommensurable and disjunctive forces, beyond cognition or knowable purpose, and itself an image of the modern condition.

The poems in Seamus Heaney’s *North* (1975) come from a time of fierce sectarian and military violence in Northern Ireland which was also a rich period for archaeological discovery of medieval Irish Viking settlement. For Heaney, as for Hill, poetic confrontation with the remains of medieval violence produces moments of imaginative recognition, but no master narrative binding together past and present. The non-narrative, multi-temporal poetic mode in which each poet operates is in itself a challenge to the tendency of medievalist war writing to stage climactic struggles and nation-changing outcomes. When such wars tell no ‘story’ and do not fit in an individual’s or a country’s ‘journey’, their nature and meaning greatly alter.

Heaney was criticised as ‘a mythmaker, an anthropologist of ritual killing’²⁷ for drawing a likeness between the violent old ‘North’ and his modern experience of Ulster life, yet his approach is tentative and ironic. In ‘Trial Pieces’, he stages his modern-day relation to the Vikings – notoriously pragmatic and belligerent figures – as uncomfortably disempowered, even ridiculous:

I am Hamlet the Dane,
skull-handler, parablist,
smeller of rot
...
coming to consciousness
by jumping in graves,
dithering, blathering.

In a further ‘trial’ (attempt), he finds a limited inheritance, a wry *ars poetica* for dark times – private, valuing small closely-worked projects like Norse bone carvings, rather than grand illuminations:

Lie down
in the word-hoard, burrow
the coil and gleam

of your furrowed brain.

...

Keep your eye clear
as the bleb of the icicle,
trust the feel of what nubbed treasure
your hands have known.

The 'tongue' of the Viking long ship speaks this to the poet, but on his own terms, 'with hindsight'. He takes from it a 'secular' survivor's creed, an admonition to self-reliance rather than the grander myth-making for which the Irish medieval has so often been used, and which had long canonised Brian Boru's defeat of the Vikings in 1014 at Clontarf, now a Dublin suburb. Heaney's mixture of terms from anthropology, archaeology and art history hinders any simple appropriation of 'Vikings' as a literary emblem, while their uncertain status – part-raiders, part-settlers – breaks up traditional nationalist identifications.

Hollywood cinema offers the most influential contemporary form of medievalist war, often inflected by concerns of class, race and politics. The lead roles of 'knight' in Brian Helgeland's *A Knight's Tale* and 'lord' in Ridley Scott's *Robin Hood* are taken by plebeians. Arthur in Jerry Bruckheimer's *King Arthur* is a disillusioned foreign mercenary abandoned by his Roman masters. Nevertheless, in all cases being 'medieval' seems to demand significant war service. Bruckheimer's unemployed Arthur ends up fighting for 'freedom' against Saxons. Both Russell Crowe's plain-man archer Robin and Kevin Costner's paternalistic baron in *Robin Hood Prince of Thieves* are primarily soldiers. War – especially Crusade – provides their credentials and back story. Costner's Robin, an escapee from a Turkish prison, will eventually thrive under King Richard after leading the local people in battle against the Sheriff and his allies the 'Picts'; Crowe's Robin, disgusted by his Crusades experience, finally learns who his real enemies are: 'State greed and despotism have engendered, by the film's end, an anarchist cell forming under Robin in Sherwood Forest.'²⁸ The film has been seen as ideologically indefinite, 'serving agenda ranging from Leftist "karmic" apologies for Arab terrorism to right-wing domestic civil libertarianism'.²⁹ In *A Knight's Tale*, the Black Prince intervenes to make the hero in name (and by birth) the 'knight' he has already proven himself to be by prowess and loyalty. Is the move a joke at the expense of organised gentility or a complicity with its demands, even a suggestion that the system works because it does tacitly acknowledge a brotherhood of merit based on deeds of arms? Whether from Left or Right, and however critical of war and the medieval in other ways, all these films maintain some medievalist connection between fighting and forms of right (or at least understandably motivated) conduct; fighting evil is their

chief currency of goodness, always expressing manhood, but also able to represent modern concerns: social justice, tolerance of difference, the right to political autonomy and individual self-realisation.³⁰

Cinema images of medieval war as evil are common, but it is rare to see the use of medievalism to contest the basic association of fighting with goodness and with struggle towards a worthwhile goal. Robert Bresson's film *Lancelot du Lac* (1974) is exceptional because its formal characteristics as well as its plot of self-destructive war refuse to connect fighting with positive values. Bresson's impersonal and anti-dramatic treatment of action and dialogue largely disallows understandings based on sympathetic or hostile reactions to character. Fighting makes no distinction between his warriors, who become unrecognisable once in their iron cladding; their fragile identities are weakly marked by flags, coloured saddlecloths and place-names (Camelot / Escalot) which seem increasingly meaningless. Rather, war engulfs and levels all – 'it's the same sign for everyone'³¹ – as we also intuit from the soundtrack's continual clank of armour and restive neighing of horses. Lancelot's tournament triumph is signalled by a repetitive montage of visual, musical and dialogue elements which thoroughly wears out the core feature of medievalist romance, the moment of recognition in which military success attaches honour to a name: 'Lancelot!'. A modern audience will become impatient when made to witness this process so many times in unvaried succession, and so may be led to understand how much they have been habituated by mainstream cinema to see armed combat as glorious and heroic. The main effort of Bresson's film is not to create comedy, unlike the contemporary Python *Holy Grail* which satirised it.³² Rather, by getting the Hollywood norms of action cinema wrong (or intolerably right) the film suggests that not only war movies but wars themselves are propagated and sustained through the acceptance of conventional aims and understandings as sacred realities, and that these might be changed.

As the space 'in the middle', without strong central government control or standing national armies, the medieval has been and still is easily read as lawless and intractable, prone to random violence and needing to be reclaimed by a strong hand. In Tennyson's *Idylls of the King* it figures as the political and moral 'wilderness / Wherein the beast was ever more and more . . . till Arthur came', 'and moving everywhere / Cleared the dark places and let in the law, / And broke the bandit holds and cleansed the land'.³³ Tennyson's rhetoric of law and order sounds eerily like the public discourse of the contemporary 'War on Terror', 'bringing to justice' the enemies of 'freedom'. The rise of organisations independent of state power – al Qaeda and the Taliban are examples, along with transnational corporations – has led some neo-Conservative commentators to speak of a 'new Middle Ages',

thought able, as Bruce Holsinger has argued, to ‘render irrelevant the authority, territorial integrity, and jurisdictions of modern nations’.³⁴ It is ironic that the ‘medieval’ can be stigmatised under the name of stateless violence, since throughout Europe medieval war has so often been associated with national genesis, with an agenda to oust aliens, repel invaders and establish home borders and racial integrity. Spain is replete with images of the surrender of the Muslim Emirate of Granada to Ferdinand and Isabella in 1492; in France the anti-immigrant Front National loudly invokes Joan of Arc; ‘ethnic cleansing’ in Bosnia in the 1990s fed on the legend of the medieval Serbian hero and saint Miloš Obilić (d. 1389).³⁵ Tennyson’s Arthurian *Idylls* illustrate an enduring paradox: somehow both the disease (lawless violence) and the cure (righteous force) can be ‘medieval’. That medievalist war can mean both stateless disorder and the foundation of nationhood and right order shows how complex and unstable a sign it still is, however simple and certain its applications are often meant to be.

NOTES

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Medievalism in Spanish America after independence

The study of medievalism has mostly been circumscribed to discussions of European nations, with a heavy focus on Britain and the English-speaking colonies, and an added interest in France and its colonial holdings.¹ As is evident from the attention paid to former colonies, medievalism is not a solely intra-European trait, and although Britain and its former imperial holdings have taken the lion's share of attention, medievalism is a global discourse that plays key roles in other parts of the world.² The economic and geographic expansion of colonial powers like Britain and France – where medievalism was a key component of nineteenth-century thought – also had a significant role in spreading medievalism around the globe, particularly in Spanish America as the area that concerns us here. This chapter thus adds to a global examination of medievalism mainly by presenting functions and effects that the idea of the Middle Ages had in Spanish America after political independence in the early nineteenth century, but also by drawing attention to the global spread of medievalist thinking from colonial centres to these postcolonial outposts. Focusing on the Southern Cone – especially Chile and Argentina – the chapter also enters into dialogue with settler postcolonial theory as a productive perspective with which to understand the Euro-American creole elites, and one that has been insufficiently utilised due to the alleged difference between true white settler colonists and both Spanish American forms of colonisation and the mixed race of Euro-American creoles.³

In examining postcolonial medievalism from Southern Spanish America this chapter focuses on three local figures who were contemporaries: Domingo Sarmiento (Argentina 1811–1888), José Victorino Lastarria (Chile 1817–1888), and Andrés Bello (Venezuela 1781 – Chile 1865). The three were public intellectuals and political figures who, because of exile, intersected with each other in elite social circles in Chile. Before we start, however, and considering that these three figures live and write during or after the political independence of their respective Spanish American countries, let us note that the term

‘postcolonial’ in this chapter is not associated with political emancipation and therefore does not mean a time *after* the colonial period. Postcolonial elements are found in post-conquest centuries of the subcontinent such that the post-colonial starts, in my estimation, after contact. The commonly found hyphenated term ‘post-colonial’ has been identified in the critical literature with the time after political independence (instead of after contact), and this chapter will not employ it. To be even more precise, a more adequate term for postcolonial encounters as observed in Spanish America and elsewhere is the term ‘midcolonial’, coined by the medievalist Jeffrey Jerome Cohen. Midcoloniality is particularly useful for pointing to the fact that ‘the colonial’ has no precise beginnings or ends because societies, which are always heterogeneous, are also built of layers of colonial contacts and may be in asynchronous and concurrent processes of colonisation and decolonisation.⁴ As an example, Amerindians in the north of Argentina and Chile had been part of the Inca Empire before the arrival of Europeans, and their midcoloniality includes inter-Amerindian expansionist contact as well as colonisation by Spanish conquerors and their creole offspring.

Particularly telling for medievalism studies of the new Southern Cone republics is another necessary distinction between political and cultural emancipation. At the end of the revolutionary period in the mid-1820s these new politically independent republics still viewed themselves as dependent culturally on the Spanish colonial era. Despite political emancipation, much of the creole writing surrounding the revolution and its aftermath was spent on the meaning and effects of a cultural dependence that had continued after the end of Spanish rule. In the Southern Cone, creoles were the local Euro-American elites, and divergences in their embracing or rejection of Spanish heritage can be loosely associated with the conservative and the liberal strands of these societies. As such, the moderately conservative thought of Andrés Bello would embrace Spanish heritage in the former colonies, while the liberals Victorino Lastarria and Domingo Sarmiento regarded Spanish heritage as a major impediment to the progress of their nations. What is striking from the perspective of medievalism studies is that in these newly independent republics the continuation of a colonial Spanish heritage was in great measure a questioning of the standing of the Middle Ages in these new societies. The reformers in particular considered that their newly politically independent societies were largely still living in a medieval period that had been established with the Spanish conquest.

Taking into account that the subcontinent had come under European control mainly in the 1500s – that is, only after the historical end of the Middle Ages – how was the colonial period of Spanish America considered *medieval*? Internationally, there was a well-established and widespread

defamatory discourse known as the Black Legend. This discourse stipulated the backwardness of Spain and an inherently negative estimation of Spaniards as the cruellest colonisers and closed-minded religious fanatics. It is mainly associated with Bartolomé de Las Casas's description of the brutality of the conquest and colonisation of the Americas in the widely circulated *A Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies* (1542, published 1552) but scholars have linked its beginnings and strength to the early modern wars with Italy and the Lower Countries and to imperial competition between Spain and Britain.⁵ In terms of a living medieval period in colonial Spanish America, I will highlight the part of this defamatory discourse that posited a medieval Spanish mentality fossilised with the counter-reformation reign of Philip II (1527–1598), manifested mainly in theocracy and despotism, and which writers believed to have continued until their own presents.

The relationship between the South American reformers and the Black Legend is well known, and it has been customary to view the anti-Spanishness of the liberal creole elites as an American instantiation of this international intellectual history. A main point in this chapter is that despite the well-recognised importance of the Black Legend, the cultural battle lines in Spanish America after political independence can be fruitfully understood as a form of medievalism grounded in the stipulated mediocrity of metropolitan Spain. The circulation of this medievalising discourse of the Black Legend is likewise a fitting example of the global character and reach of medievalism during the early nineteenth century, and of the importance of a global viewpoint in understanding this field of studies. The spread of Black Legend medievalism is a fitting example of both Spain's intra-colonised European position and of the circulation and impact that metropolitan medievalist thinking could have in the postcolonies. In the remainder of this chapter I will provide examples of this global extension of medievalism into postcolonial Spanish America and show the associated effects of this medievalising discourse in nineteenth-century Chile which stemmed from the colonial powers of the day.

One of the early avenues in which the medievalising discourse of the Spanish Black Legend circulated in South America was the French *Histoire de Deux Indes* by the Abbé Raynal, which was an authoritative book for local liberal reformers. In addition to the special attention he paid to Spanish cruelty towards the conquered Amerindians, Raynal circulated the above-mentioned ideas on the historical stagnation of Spain. Raynal worked within the intellectual scheme that explained the Middle Ages as exactly that, a dark and unenlightened middle time separating the valued classical world from the rekindling of knowledge in the so-called Renaissance. Using the

metaphor of light for the beginnings of modernity, Raynal stipulated that the Spaniards had instead established their overseas empire in an ‘age of ignorance and barbarism’.⁶ Europe, he stipulates, was not much enlightened at the time of the Spanish conquest but even that little available knowledge had been rejected by Spain, leaving America under an even darker medieval age of ignorance and barbarism.⁷ This Spanish age of darkness stagnated in time because, intoxicated by their victories, Spaniards had continued in their false road, rejecting the little knowledge returning to the rest of Europe.⁸ In fact, a distinguishing overall character of the nation was its adherence to non-enlightened ways and its proud refusal to change: Spain venerated its past and proudly rejected any innovation that was not practised in the ‘glorious days’ of the conquest.⁹

Following these accounts, according to local liberal reformists the Spain that colonised the Americas was also a theocratic and religiously fanatical society, and the sixteenth century was a watershed that had failed to separate the waters into the medieval and the modern in the long reign of Philip II. European nations had entered modernity in the 1500s but Spain had instead been left behind in its spirit of counter-reformation, proudly lingering in the medieval centuries, isolated in spirit behind the temporal wall of the Pyrenees. The first complete articulation of this Black Legend medievalism in the Southern Cone is José Victorino Lastarria’s *Investigations on the Social Influence of the Conquest and the Colonial System of the Spaniards in Chile*, published in 1844. This was the first historical essay requested from the newly minted University of Chile, whose dean was Andrés Bello, and which inaugurated the annual presentation of major historical works as part of a national historiographical campaign. Lastarria wrote in the French interpretative style of philosophical history, and he summarised the meaning of his treatise in the notion that now, after Chile had accomplished its political independence, it had to battle against its inner Spanish heritage: ‘Tumbled is the despotism of the kings, but standing with all its vigour is the despotism of the past.’¹⁰ Spain had transplanted to America ‘all the vices of its absurd system of government’ and one of its most nefarious traits was despotism – a reliance on all-powerful leaders that mimicked the absolutism that the Spanish monarchs had over the American colonies.¹¹ Due to Spain’s theocratic make-up, fostered and maintained by the Inquisition, the mother country energetically defended a ‘monstrous’ alliance of monarchy and Church.¹² The colonial system had in fact the ‘perverse intention’ of keeping colonial subjects in the most ‘degrading ignorance’ to ensure their perpetual subservience to the absolute sovereignty of the king of Spain, their ‘natural lord’.¹³ Lastarria’s medievalism becomes more categorical in his later treatise *America*, where quoting extensively from Henry Thomas Buckle’s *History of*

Civilization in England he explicitly places Spain in a stagnant medieval pool in the civilisational watershed of the sixteenth century. The Englishman Buckle included in this work a long chapter on Spain as the direct opposite of the English modern civilisational outlook. Both the Black Legend and its medievalist core come though in this metropolitan examination of diminished and belittled Spain, and provide us with an additional example of the global character and postcolonial circulation of medievalism in the hands of the colonial powers of the day. As Lastarria translated from Buckle, whom I quote here from the English original: 'There she [Spain] lies, at the further extremity of the Continent, a huge and torpid mass, the sole representative now remaining of the feelings and knowledge of the Middle Ages. And, what is the worst symptom of all, she is satisfied with her own condition.'¹⁴ As Lastarria states, now in his own words, the ruin of the country is due to the 'extravagant tenacity with which it maintains its civilisation of the middle ages' and showing acute recognition of temporality he maintains that 'the time to which those crimes [of the colonial system] are attributed is always the same; [because] the Spain of today is the Spain of the sixteenth century'.¹⁵

The Argentine Domingo Sarmiento, Lastarria's friend and almost exact contemporary, was another major Spanish American liberal reformer known for his fervent anti-Spanish positions. Like Lastarria, he rejected the Spanish colonial centuries as backward and as the main impediment to the subcontinent's entry into the modern age. Sarmiento was in fact one of the most explicit proponents of the medievality of Spanish America and in many of his major works medievalism is a structuring device for the explanation of Argentina and Spain's former colonies as a whole.¹⁶ In his reply to Lastarria's *Investigations*, Sarmiento agrees regarding the ills bequeathed by the mother country stating that 'Spain... reproduced itself in America.'¹⁷ But, he argued, Spain could not have a perverse intention towards America, as Lastarria proposed; it had merely bequeathed to the colonies the medieval character it itself had at the time of the conquest. Sarmiento advances that 'when it has managed to suffocate all progress, all civilising movement; when it believes it has guaranteed a long-lasting existence to feudality and to the ignorance of the middle ages, [Spain] also hurls colonies'.¹⁸ The Americas are also fatefully marred by the Spanish heritage of despotism. In a book review of a natural history of Chile, starting with a historical account of the Spain that colonised the American continent, Sarmiento had asked explicitly for the type of philosophical history that Lastarria delivered at the university. There he highlighted again how the Spain that launched the American conquest manifested the spirit of Spanish America as a whole. Without utilising the

concept of mediocrity this time, Sarmiento similarly describes a Spain that ‘rests from its long battle with the Moors, lights a bonfire to burn anyone who might try to disturb the dream to which she will abandon herself’ and sends off three ships across the sea to support the indolence and idleness of body and spirit in which she prepares to live ‘under all the combined despotisms conceivable’.¹⁹ In that Spain is the ‘Spanish American spirit as a whole’, and understanding it ‘[w]e would see... what seeds Spain was coming to plant in the colonies; [and] what spirit was going to fertilise them’.²⁰ The exact expression of the colonial spirit, of the Spain that rejected modernity, is the despotic dictator of Buenos Aires, Juan Manuel de Rosas, because of whom Sarmiento is in exile.²¹ But although a quintessential example, Rosas as local caudillo (authoritarian political-military leader) evidences a style of government that in the subcontinent has ‘a single type, an internal constitution of abominable description’ and is because of the ‘traditions, customs, beliefs and ideas that were bequeathed by Spain’.²² Likewise, in the mid-nineteenth century, Spain was still the wilfully ‘medieval’ sixteenth-century throwback it had been when it colonised the Americas. For instance, in his travelogue from Spain, Sarmiento asserts that ‘If I had travelled in Spain in the sixteenth century, my eyes would not have seen anything different than what they see today’; and in another example of his manipulation of temporality he stipulated that ‘since the Inquisition and Phillip II, . . . the Spain of today. . . is the same it was then!’.²³ Spain is simply ‘out of sync’ with the times.²⁴

In contrast to the reformers’ rejection of Spanish heritage, the older and more conservative Andrés Bello espoused the belief that the Spanish American subcontinent belonged to a Hispanic tradition that started in the Middle Ages. In other words, the origins of the new American republics were not the colonial 1500s but the longer span of Spanish civilisation that had started with the fall of Rome. The strong positions espoused by Lastarria in his first treatise for the university led Bello to write an immediate rebuttal where he identified and rejected the elements of Lastarria’s exposition associated with the Black Legend.²⁵ Cognisant of its defamatory nature he pointed out that Spaniards were made a target; they were an object of envy because they had been the first power of Europe. Spain had not been especially cruel in the conquest of America but instead had been a force for good. Spain had a ‘civilising mission’ that, similar to the Roman Empire, she had successfully executed in the distant and vast American continent.²⁶ Likewise, in terms of the change from medieval to modern, Bello viewed the age of conquest under the Catholic kings as a successful watershed between feudalism and a modern state power. Reviewing the same historical chapter of the work on Chilean natural history that had set Sarmiento on a diatribe against

Spanish heritage, Bello identified the Spain that conquered the Americas as a heroic and warlike nation that had left behind 'the convulsion of feudality' and had replaced it with 'a central and vigorous administration, accurate in its recommendations; [led by] a principle of unity that vivifies and harmonises. . .'.²⁷ Bello also spent much of his life working on bona fide medieval studies.²⁸ In the prologue to his life-long editorial work on the Spanish foundational epic *The Poem of the Cid*, he placed himself among those who studied their respective homelands through the editing of the nation's oldest texts, and explained that the work was edited to shed some light on 'our language and poetry'.²⁹ That language, the Castilian of the now ex-colonies, was for Bello a common trait with 'our fathers' and because of the spiritual origin of Castilian-speaking America, and in order to forestall the loss of this bond, he considered that it behoved Spanish Americans to maintain the purity of original Castilian as a 'providential' medium of communication and as a 'fraternal' link for all nations of Spanish origin on both continents.³⁰ This view of Bello's is related to another utility of medievalism, since Bello insisted on the unification of Spanish America through Castilian origins in order to prevent the transfiguration of the former colonies into a new middle ages. Bello's major fear and reason for writing his famous *Grammar of the Castilian Language Destined for the Use of Americans* was to forestall the fragmentation of the original Castilian into different national languages, the equivalents of the romance tongues created after the disintegration of Rome. Local usages of Castilian could alter the structure of the language and convert it into a multiplicity of 'irregular, licentious, barbarous dialects; embryos of future languages, that after long elaboration would reproduce in America what was in Europe the tenebrous period of the corruption of Latin'.³¹

We have observed at this point two complementary uses of medievalism by South American creoles, positing the positive or negative 'medieval' origins of their local societies, and in a way that, despite their different valuations of this heritage, stipulates the overall Hispanic character of what we know as Spanish or Latin America. But to state the obvious: why, even before the immigration waves of the later nineteenth century, should the subcontinent be considered mainly Hispanic? I will not fully tackle this question here, but only highlight linkages to the Amerindian component of the American continent by way of settler postcolonial studies. As noted earlier, South American creoles are in a similar position to that described in settler postcolonial studies for former British colonies such as Australia, the United States, New Zealand, or Canada.³² As the offspring of the mother country, South American creole-settlers viewed themselves as superior to other local inhabitants without European roots, but they also felt like second-class

colonial members of the metropolitan power. While they resented their own colonised position, they had an openly colonising stance towards the native Amerindian ‘savages’, whom they strove to replace as the true natives of the land. Amerindians of old could be praised as the distinct cultural foundation of a new South American republic, but living Amerindians were excluded from the societies that creoles created and ideologically strove for. As with other settler colonists in different parts of the globe, nineteenth-century South American creoles were thus both colonising and colonised, usurpers of Amerindian land and native identity, and active in attempted genocide of contemporary Amerindian tribes like their global peers.

Let us mention, then, that the three public intellectuals examined here take a stand on the Amerindian issue. A pivot in the discussion is the notion that creoles are not a new miscegenated group but rather a re-localised offshoot of Spain. It is again Lastarria who starts the discussion by painting a picture of Chilean Amerindians – the Araucanos or Mapuche – as valiant and proud, and as a special tribe that had successfully resisted the Spanish during the conquest.³³ One should mention that during these intellectual exchanges, until the expropriatory and genocidal ‘Pacification’ of Araucanía in 1870–1871, the Mapuche were still in possession of parts of their ancestral land. While it had been customary for creoles to ennoble and discursively take the place of Amerindians to justify political independence from Spain, they tended to reject their own mixed ethnicity. Surprisingly, in his *Investigations* Lastarria posited that Chile was mainly a mixed race society composed of Amerindians and Spaniards, with a dash of slave African blood. Both Bello and Sarmiento objected to this interpretation. As part of his view on the Hispanic essence of the new republics, Bello posited instead that Spanish Americans are a ‘young Iberia’.³⁴ Chile and Spanish America had prevailed over Spain in the independence wars exactly because of that Iberian element, because the new republics were a new Spain.³⁵ In terms of miscegenation, in fact, for Bello even medieval Iberian Spaniards were purely Western, and he spent a good deal of medievalist work separating the identity of all Hispanic nations from possible contamination with Islamic sources, explicitly rejecting the significance of medieval Muslim Iberia and thus a probable Oriental character for Castilian literature.³⁶

The Argentine Sarmiento is even more xenophobic in his views, and he rejected Lastarria’s incorporation of Amerindians into the make-up of the new republics using extremely racist language.³⁷ He correctly identifies the creoles’ use of Amerindians as a legitimising group for their nativeness, insisting however that as the sons of Spain, creoles are Spaniards in America. The misleading discourse of fraternity with the

Amerindians was fabricated during the independence movement because of creoles' hostility towards 'our parents', whom 'we wanted to expel from America', and it falsely presented the notion that these 'savage men' were part of 'our American history'.³⁸ Amerindians, during colonial times as much as after political independence, were for Sarmiento the enemy of Chile (and his native Argentina), and, he also expected the new republics to absorb, destroy, and enslave these foreign elements, as the Spaniards did.³⁹ Sarmiento, in sum, feels 'an invincible repugnance' for the Amerindians and is relieved that due to these policies, instead of being in the hands of savages who are incapable of progress, Spanish America is European and 'occupied today by the Caucasian race, the most perfect, the most intelligent, the most beautiful, and the most progressive of all the races of the world'.⁴⁰ For Sarmiento, Providence ordains such injustice because it is an immutable law that superior, more powerful and advanced races should supplant those who are weaker or lagging in the line of civilisation. One should note that this providential law according to which Caucasians should supplant weaker races can be a serious conundrum for reformer Spanish American creoles: in their own estimation they stem from the more backwards Spanish civilisation, and either due to the legacy of medieval Muslim Iberia or due to hybridisation with Amerindian natives, they were not generally recognised as white or as Caucasian as they liked to think of themselves. Raynal, for instance, in the earlier quoted work, notes the inherent miscegenation of the metropolis and its colonial offspring. According to him, the mother country's historically lax sexuality is the reason for contemporary Spaniards to be a mixed race in all parts of the world: the blood of 'the Moors' flows in their veins in the Peninsula and that of 'the savages' in the Americas.⁴¹ In other words then, since this was a beneficial providential law, why would a more powerful, more Caucasian, and more advanced neocolonial power not come to relieve Spanish American republics of their generalised medieval mentality and civilisational backwardness?

We should highlight at this point that liberal reformers who were most explicit about the medieval character of their Spanish-colonial backward societies were also an open door to economic colonialism (neocolonialism) in their thirst for Europeanisation. And the reformers' push for neocolonialism can actually be found in the same writings that medievalise Spain. Running through Black Legend medievalism is the invidious local notion that Spanish Americans were colonised by inferior Spaniards instead of being colonised, like the United States, by the superior modern Britons. This difference in colonial antecedents had set the United States in the course of democracy and progress instead of the medievalised Spanish-inspired despotism and backwardness. In a blanket statement of value, answering a rhetorical question about the results of the different origins of

colonisation, Sarmiento metaphorically summarises ideas running across many of his writings: 'Life in the north, death in the south, in the north people speak English, in the south people speak Spanish.'⁴² Likewise, concerned that in Europe Chileans were viewed as savages, Sarmiento worried that European men and capital would not want to leave behind a civilised country to live among barbarians; yet Chile needed intercourse with Europe because Europe 'brings us the progresses of her civilisation'.⁴³ The importance of the book on natural history that Sarmiento was reviewing in these pages was also explained using a neocolonial rationale. European and US neocolonialism was the remedy required to achieve the de-medievalisation of the new republics; the introduction of modernity through technology and industry would bring these new nations into the modern world. As Sarmiento states in this review, Spanish America was not sufficiently known in Europe, and such books on natural history would 'open the doors to European industry' and predispose it to come and 'vivify' the local natural resources 'with art and capital'.⁴⁴ In contrast to Sarmiento's neocolonial stance, the more conservative Bello, who was also far more positive about Spanish heritage, does not stress the economic utility of this book on Chile's natural resources but notes instead the overall importance of the work for internationally valuable scientific fields such as zoology, botany, and mineralogy.⁴⁵

To conclude, we have observed in this chapter that medievalism formed a backbone of political and national discussions at a crucial time in the Spanish American Southern Cone region. As seen in the heated debates about cultural dependence and the assumed mediocrity of Spain and Spanish culture in the former colonies, 'the Middle Ages' functioned as a powerful structuring device after political independence in nineteenth-century Chile and Argentina. As observed, the idea of the Middle Ages had different structural uses for the creole elites of the newly independent Southern Cone republics. An overarching effect, however, was that in both strands medievalism created a still widespread cultural definition of the subcontinent as essentially Hispanic. In turn, this essentially Hispanic character garnered the Spanish medieval heritage, envisioned either as a positive or as a negative common past, to maintain the privileged position of the Europeanised (whether or not purely 'white') upper classes. The necessary path to modernisation, according to liberal reformers, was thus to reject a medievalised Spain and labour to realign the new nations with 'modern' colonial powers for both intellectual and economic colonialism, seeking assistance from Anglo-Saxon countries such as Britain and the United States as well as contemporary powerhouses like Germany and France. As I have argued elsewhere, Chile furthered neocolonial relationships with immigrants from Germanic countries who

were charged with bringing intellectual and educational forms of modernity to the new nation.⁴⁶

As another overarching effect of this local medievalism, Spanish and Spanish American medievality provided liberal reformers with a context from which to demand reforms in their home societies. In fact, despite the reformers' call for a democratic society, the recognition that most of the local inhabitants lived in a medieval Spanish past served to set them more strongly on a course of societal reform that strived to separate the masses from their lived and cherished Spanish past. For liberal reformers, many of the ills of their societies were interpreted as living medieval remnants bequeathed by the colonial era, including elements that are not examined here, like the oriental character of the new republics, the feudal character of land tenure, the physiognomy of creoles, and myriad aspects of daily lifestyle. Noticeably in Argentina, where the reformist Sarmiento became president between 1868–1874, medievalism provided a powerful structuring mechanism with which to domesticate local political resistance, and from which to launch the internal colonisation of marginalised local inhabitants who were allegedly still living in the Middle Ages. As mentioned elsewhere, such changes included the ousting of the populist despotic 'feudal lord' Juan Manuel de Rosas in 1852, the attempted modernisation by industry of the allegedly 'medieval' second largest city of the Argentine Republic, and the crushing of rural revolts led by destitute 'medieval' masses of gauchos.⁴⁷

As observed elsewhere, medievalism in the Southern Cone was not strictly a masculine preserve. Possibly the first example of an overt medievalisation of Chile around the time of its political independence is to be found in Maria Graham's *Journal of a Residence in Chile* (1824). In this earlier travel narrative, Graham pays particular attention to a contemporary lifestyle and structures her depiction of the country around a Moorish medieval character that was allegedly inherited by Chile from Spain.⁴⁸ I cannot yet speculate further on the exact connections between Graham's depiction of Chile and the public discourse of the male creole intellectuals discussed in this chapter. Her example nevertheless highlights the fact that metropolitan women could play a significant active part in the global spread of medievalist thinking from colonial centres to postcolonial outposts.

To conclude, as an area of scholarship that, despite some examples to the contrary, is heavily centred on British and English-speaking examples, much remains to be done in order to fully internationalise medievalism studies. This internationalisation includes the understanding that 'the Middle Ages' and the medievalisms it enables might be quite different entities when seen and experienced from outside the 'heart of Europe'.⁴⁹ Spanish America as a large subcontinent with a different perspective on 'the medieval' and of its

own medieval make-up has been under-examined in medievalism studies in the Anglo-American academy, although it would assist in internationalising Anglocentric and metropolitan assumptions lying at the core of medievalism studies as a field. This chapter on nineteenth-century Chile stands as an example of the understudied but substantial field of Spanish American post-colonial medievalism and is offered in the spirit of an invitation for a more truly global and worldly view for medievalism studies – a crucial field in our still current disciplinary and intellectual configurations, in global examinations of temporality, and in the momentous interrogation of modernity, neomedievalism, and the medieval–modern divide.

NOTES

1. See the many volumes of the dedicated journal *Studies in Medievalism* (1976–), as well as the timeline available in the review branch of the journal, *Medievally Speaking: Medievalism in Review*: <http://medievallyspeaking.blogspot.com/2009/09/timeline.html> (accessed on 14 November 2014), which adds less disseminated works on German and Italian medievalism studies. On medievalisms in English-speaking colonies and French colonial holdings, see for instance, Stephanie Trigg (ed.), *Medievalism and the Gothic in Australian Culture* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2005), which started the Australia-sponsored series *Making the Middle Ages* – nevertheless dedicated to England, continental Europe and North America – and Michelle Warren, *Creole Medievalism: Colonial France and Joseph Bédier's Middle Ages* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011).
2. See Kathleen Davis and Nadia Altschul (eds.), *Medievalisms in the Postcolonial World: The Idea of 'the Middle Ages' Outside Europe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009). See also Candace Barrington's chapter in this volume for a different approach to the globalised reach of medievalism.
3. See Nadia Altschul, *Geographies of Philological Knowledge: Postcoloniality and the Transatlantic National Epic* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012), pp. 18–19.
4. Jeffrey Jerome Cohen (ed.), *The Postcolonial Middle Ages* (New York: Palgrave, 2000), p. 3.
5. See Margaret Greer, Walter Mignolo, and Maureen Quilligan (eds.), *Rereading the Black Legend: The Discourses of Religious and Racial Difference in the Renaissance Empires* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007); Sverker Arnoldsson, *La leyenda negra: estudios sobre sus orígenes*, vol. LXVI (Göteborg: Göteborgs Universitets arsskrift, 1960); and Rómulo Carbia, *Historia de la leyenda negra hispanoamericana* (Madrid: Consejo de la Hispanidad, 1944).
6. Guillaume-Thomas-François Raynal, abbé, *A Philosophical and Political History of the Settlements and Trade of the Europeans in the East and West Indies. Revised, augmented, and published, in ten volumes by the Abbé Raynal*, (New York: Negro Universities Press, 1969), vol. III, p. 216.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 232.

8. *Ibid.*, pp. 216–217.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 223.
10. José Victorino Lastarria, *Investigaciones sobre la influencia social de la conquista i del sistema colonial de los españoles en Chile*. Por J. V. Lastarria. Memoria presentada a la Universidad de Chile en sus Sesión Jeneral del 22 de setiembre de 1844, en cumplimiento del Artículo 28 de la Lei de 19 de noviembre de 1842 (Santiago: Imprenta del Siglo, 1844), p. 131.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 34.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 57.
13. *Ibid.*, pp. 41, 42–43.
14. See José Victorino Lastarria, *La América*. Por J. V. Lastarria. *Enviado Extraordinario i Ministro Plenipotenciario de Chile en las Repúblicas del Plata i el Imperio del Brasil, etc.*, second edition of Part I, (Gante: Imprenta de Eug. Vanderhaeghen, 1867), p. 205; and the English original in Henry Thomas Buckle, *History of Civilization in England*, 2nd edn. (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1883), vol. II, p. 596.
15. Lastarria, *La América*, p. 222.
16. Nadia Altschul, 'Writing Argentine Premodernity: Medieval Temporality in the Creole Writer-Statesman Domingo F. Sarmiento', *Interventions: International Journal of Postcolonial Studies* 16.5 (2014), 716–729.
17. Domingo Faustino Sarmiento, *Obras Completas*, 53 vols. (La Matanza: Universidad Nacional de La Matanza, 2001), vol. II, p. 168.
18. *Ibid.*, vol. II, p. 167.
19. *Ibid.*, vol. II, p. 160.
20. *Ibid.*, vol. II, p. 160.
21. *Ibid.*, vol. II, p. 161.
22. *Ibid.*, vol. II, p. 161.
23. Domingo Faustino Sarmiento, *Viajes por Europa, Africa i América 1845–1847* (Madrid: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1993), pp. 166, 129.
24. *Ibid.*, p. 132.
25. Andrés Bello, *Andrés Bello digital: Obras completas, bibliografía* (Madrid: DIGIBIS, 2002), vol. XXIII, pp. 155–173.
26. *Ibid.*, vol. XXIII, p. 165.
27. *Ibid.*, vol. XXIII, pp. 127–128.
28. Altschul, *Geographies*, pp. 113–132.
29. Bello, *Andrés Bello digital*, vol. VII, pp. 30–31.
30. *Ibid.*, vol. IV, p. 11.
31. *Ibid.*, vol. IV, p. 12.
32. See Stephen Slemon, 'Unsettling the Empire: Resistance Theory for the Second World', *Journal of Postcolonial Writing* 30.2 (1990), 30–41; Anna Johnston and Alan Lawson, 'Settler Colonies,' in *A Companion to Postcolonial Studies*, Henry Schwarz and Sangeeta Ray (eds.), (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), pp. 360–376; and Altschul, *Geographies*.
33. Lastarria, *Investigaciones*, p. 23.
34. Bello, *Andrés Bello digital*, vol. XXIII, p. 169.
35. *Ibid.*, p. 169.
36. Altschul, *Geographies*, pp. 179–201.
37. Sarmiento, *Obras Completas*, vol. II, pp. 163–168.

38. *Ibid.*, vol. II, pp. 164–165.
39. *Ibid.*, vol. II, p. 165.
40. *Ibid.*, vol. II, pp. 165–166.
41. Raynal, *Philosophical and Political History*, vol. III, p. 160.
42. Sarmiento, *Obras Completas*, vol. II, p. 167.
43. *Ibid.*, vol. II, p. 132.
44. *Ibid.*, vol. II, p. 159.
45. Bello, *Andrés Bello digital*, vol. XXIII, p. 132.
46. Altschul, *Geographies*, pp. 57–82.
47. Altschul, 'Writing Argentine Premodernity'. In contrast to those International Relations theorists discussed by Holsinger who perceived the medieval as the wellspring of (Anglocentric and Northern European) modernity, and based on a rejection of Spanish 'medievality,' Sarmiento's 'modernisation theory' follows the standard narrative of emergence from medieval times and evidences the stereotypical project of attempting to modernise parts of the world that are deemed premodern.
48. Nadia Altschul and Kathleen Davis, 'Orientalizing Chile and India in the Age of Militarized Trading Networks', forthcoming in *Oxford Handbook of Victorian Medievalism*, Joanne Parker, Nick Groom, and Corinna Wagner (eds.), (Oxford: Oxford University Press).
49. The developing nature of scholarship in this area is apparent in the diversity of interpretations elicited by non-European and 'international/global' medievalisms, a diversity that is reflected in the different positions adopted in this chapter, Bruce Holsinger's and Candace Barrington's. Examining medievalism from the perspective of colonial and former colonial lands, one might ask whether the association of spaces of 'global medievalism' with *translatio imperii et studii* is itself telling of the relationships of medievalisms with empire, and of Anglocentric and metropolitan assumptions. The Western Christianity at the core of the neo-medievalism studied by Holsinger, or Overo-Tarimo's 'resurrection' of Chaucer in Barrington's essay might, furthermore, be alternatively construed and explored as forms of medievalist 'Occidentalism'. For Occidentalism and resistances from within medievalist Occidentalism see Altschul, *Geographies*. For a critique of medievalism as nostalgia and 'resurrection' – the idea that medievalism starts when the Middle Ages is dead, thus excluding those *global non-European* parts of the world that are so often deemed medieval – see Altschul, 'Medievalism and the Contemporaneity of the Medieval in Postcolonial Brazil,' *Studies in Medievalism* XXIV (2015), 139–154.

II

BRUCE HOLSINGER

Neomedievalism and international relations

‘Neomedievalism: The World Is Fragmenting, Badly. Gird Yourself for a New Dark Age.’ This screaming title of a 2009 essay in *Foreign Policy* magazine enlists *neomedievalism* as a word of almost apocalyptic warning. ‘Many see the global economic crisis as proof that we live in one world’, the author warns in the opening sentence. ‘But as countries stumble to right the wrongs of the corporate masters of the universe, they are driving us right back to a future that looks like nothing more than a new Middle Ages, that centuries-long period of amorphous conflict from the fifth to the fifteenth century when city-states mattered as much as countries.’ The Middle Ages imagined here is not that epoch of barbarism, backwardness, and primitivism so familiar from historiographical stereotypes. This Middle Ages, rather, is an era of fragmented jurisdictions, amorphous violence, and pre-national sovereignty. Our own nation-based political formations are fragmenting into ‘the agile geopolitical units of a neomedieval world’.¹

The term ‘neomedievalism’ has many connotations; in the small but widening field of ‘medievalism studies’ it is most often used these days to distinguish a mode of appropriation that operates with a more overtly blatant disregard for historical veracity than its more imitative or avowedly ‘true-to-the-past’ medievalist counterparts. As one scholar has characterised it, ‘neomedievalism severs itself from history, often with conscious irony and anachronism, producing works refracted through the lens of contemporary medievalisms rather than rooted in a real sense of the Middle Ages’.² This chapter will examine the development of neomedievalism in the domain of modern political theory, where it has come to refer to non-state and transnational formations within the emerging milieu of globalisation, both during and after the Cold War. I will be concerned in particular with that branch of political theory commonly referred to as international relations theory (IR). The discourse of IR theory is quite complex, with its own jargon and idiom, and much of it assumes a basic knowledge of a large body of work on political formations, the history of diplomacy, the categories of international

relations, and the nature of global development, among other related topics. At the same time, most of this work is much less interested in the accuracy or verifiability of its claims about the medieval past than it is in the power of its historical analogies to shape the future, and in this sense speaks in provocative ways to the (still provisional) distinctions scholars are currently drawing between medievalism and neomedievalism. This chapter might also be read as both counterpart and complement to Candace Barrington's contribution on 'global medievalisms': IR neomedievalism is a particular kind of 'temporal global medievalism', as she calls it. It has served as a 'prism' for comprehending coeval cultures and political formations outside the history of Western historical development, even as it has enabled theorists to redirect a neomedievalist lens (often a distorting one) onto their own societies' emergence from a medieval past.

Rather than attempting a systematic survey of the field, then, I will discuss a variety of neomedievalist approaches to the history and theory of international relations, several of them quite eccentric, and not all of them accepted by specialists as part of the disciplinary history of international relations. This is as it should be, perhaps, given the rhetorical amorphousness of political neomedievalism and the range of subfields and disciplines it traverses. Neomedievalism is less a subject or field of study than it is an argumentative mode, and it is in this spirit that the chapter approaches the variety of writings it examines.

Neomedievalism and/as modernisation theory

As other chapters in this volume demonstrate very well, medievalism has had an enduring role in shaping the languages and logics of statecraft and nation-building in the post-medieval era, from the Early Modern period through the twentieth century. Nadia Altschul's chapter, for example, shows how logics of medievalism were at the centre of the discourse surrounding the so-called Black Legend as it helped to define early modern and later understandings of Spanish imperial and colonial projects in the Americas. What perhaps distinguishes IR neomedievalism from other forms of medievalism is its active role in the discourse of international relations over the last century. Beginning in the decade following the end of World War II, such themes came to shape an important body of work in IR theory that gained prominence in the early decades of the Cold War. 'Modernisation theory', as this body of work came to be called, was an attempt by primarily Anglo-American political theorists to describe and diagnose the differing rates of economic and social development that distinguished the Western capitalist system from the communist systems of the Eastern Bloc.

For many of these writers, the European Middle Ages represented much more than just the medieval origins of modern intellectual and diplomatic history. Modernisation theory depended on models of medieval polity as direct institutional predecessors of modern forms of sovereignty: a genealogy that demonstrates the persuasive power of a progressivist model of medieval statecraft on the study of modern state formation. As Stanley Rothman argued in *European Society and Politics* in 1969, fundamental continuities underlie the course of Western democracy:

England developed many of the characteristics of a modern nation before the economic and social revolutions of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. From the Norman Conquest of 1066, the rudiments of a nationwide system of public administration began to develop, reaching a relatively high stage of complexity and differentiation by the fifteenth century. Yet from the Magna Carta of 1215 there also began to develop a set of legal and political restraints upon the exercise of absolute authority by the monarchy. In medieval times England had a Parliament which was in crude form a representative assembly. Since then the constitutional history of the country has recurrently involved the adjustment of the balance of power between the parts of a strong central government and between this government and organized groups and local leaders claiming freedom from central authority unless it acted with their assent.³

In an assessment that could have been lifted straight from medievalist administrative history, Rothman suggests that the Middle Ages serves a double modelling function with respect to modern statecraft, public administration, and jurisdiction, providing both historical precedents for representative government and a system of constraints on this government's actions. John Herz, writing at the end of the previous decade in *International Politics in an Atomic Age* (1959), goes further, emphasising the long historical struggle required to squeeze the spirit of modern statecraft out of the dialectical antagonisms of medieval feudalism: 'the transition from medieval hierarchism to modern compartmentalized sovereignties was neither easy, nor straight, nor short. Modern sovereignty arose out of the triangular struggle among emperors and popes, popes and kings, and kings and emperors. . . . The large-area state came finally to occupy the place that the castle or fortified town had previously held as a unit of impenetrability'.⁴ The 1648 Westphalian Peace, a series of negotiations between sovereign states that initiated a new mode of sovereignty in international relations, 'was the turning point, the Great Divide between what were still partially medieval situations reflecting a certain permeability of the rising nation-state . . . and the modern era of closed units no longer brooking such interference'. This settlement, 'for all practical purposes, had conferred sovereign independence

upon those princes who formally were still included in the Empire; yet', emphasises Herz, even Westphalia 'had not abolished the long-established, essentially feudal structure of the Empire itself'.⁵

Given its reputation, one would expect to find in modernisation theory a very different discourse of periodisation at play: a standard Enlightenment narrative of emergence from a stereotyped Dark Ages that would fit the Cold War project of bringing modernity to those benighted and still pre-modern parts of the world. The more one acquaints oneself with the modernisation theory of the Cold War, though, the more one comes away with a sense of the peculiar status of the Middle Ages as a veritable well-spring of modernisation, whether industrial, economic, or intellectual. A key text here is Joseph Strayer's *On the Medieval Origins of the Modern State* (1970), which represents in some ways the culmination of the neomedievalist strain in modernisation theory of the Cold War despite its influential place in the discipline of medieval history proper. For Strayer, medieval statecraft provided a model for polity rooted in a continuous history of European state-building, from the twelfth century through Westphalia and into the modern age. This is an argument, of course, highly conducive to the sorts of American-led Cold War 'modernisation projects' in Southeast Asia, Central America, and elsewhere.⁶

Even in those corners of modernisation theory propagating most enthusiastically the 'Three Worlds' model of global development, the Middle Ages represents anything but a bulwark against modernisation. Thus, in Talcott Parsons's *The System of Modern Societies* (1971), the Middle Ages inspires the very emergence of modern polity and statecraft. As Parsons puts it, 'The very considerable period of uneven development and transition between the end of the Middle Ages and the first crystallization of modern society largely resulted from the subtle combination in medieval society of features favoring modernization and features, basically incompatible with modernity, that could become foci of resistance to modernization.'⁷ Here Parsons is forthrightly proposing the medieval as the institutional and ideological crucible of modernity: an engine of dialectical modernisation that would ultimately result in the formation of the states system in the West.

Why were modernisation theorists in the 1960s so insistent on locating the origins of modern statecraft, bureaucracy, and so on in the Middle Ages? What precisely was at stake in this embrace of a bygone epoch so frequently abjected elsewhere in modernity's discourses of self-fashioning? Perhaps the most revelatory instance of the medievalist 'theory of origins' in Cold War modernisation theory comes in C. E. Black's *The Dynamics of Modernization: A Study in Comparative History*, first published in 1966 but released in several subsequent editions through the early 1990s, and one of the truly central texts

in the development of modernisation theory. The germane section of *The Dynamics of Modernization* begins with an experiment in time travel, a reverse Connecticut Yankee scenario: ‘What would an educated man from fifteenth-century England’, Black asks,

find familiar and what would he find strange in contemporary Britain? The written language he might be able to understand in some measure, some aspects of religious services might be familiar, a few of the great architectural monuments of his day would still be standing, and in the countryside there might be features of rural life that at least at first glance would not appear to have changed a great deal. Yet how much more striking has been the transformation, and how completely new and incomprehensible would be most of what he saw and read.⁸

According to Black, these transformations are fully compatible with the forces of modernisation already at work in his native society: ‘For the societies of Western Europe,’ Black avows, ‘the challenge of modernity to the traditional system occurred between the twelfth and eighteenth centuries’.⁹ What we now call the high and later Middle Ages – the era from the twelfth century through the middle or end of the fifteenth – is the period most responsible for launching the progress of modernisation that would culminate in the twentieth century; the ‘traditional system’ is not the Middle Ages writ large, but, very specifically for Black, the early Middle Ages, the era preceding the onset of ‘medieval modernization’, in his phrase. In terms of economic growth, medieval society provided the seeds of modern dynamism:

At the heart of this growth has been the scientific and technological revolution, which has made possible a phenomenal increase in production through the mechanization of labor. Here, as in other fields, innovation in its modern form can be traced back to the Middle Ages, but it was the rapid industrialization of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries that brought this process to its most dynamic phase.¹⁰

In terms of knowledge, too, the Middle Ages formed a sort of latent hotbed of later epistemological revolutions: ‘The origins of modern knowledge may be traced to the significant new scholarship and technological innovation in the Middle Ages commonly referred to by historians as the renaissance of the twelfth century. Modern ideas and techniques emerged decisively in the fifteenth century, and by the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries a full-fledged scientific revolution was in progress.’¹¹

Like other theorists of modernisation writing in this era, then, Black imputes to the Middle Ages an array of modernising impulses, even compulsions. Yet perhaps the most extraordinary aspect of Black’s *Dynamics of*

Modernization, and the one facet of its argument that distinguishes it from other works in this genre, is what the book reveals about the origins of modernisation theory proper. Here is where we may discern the voice of Alexis de Tocqueville echoing most clearly in this body of work, and I quote this fascinating passage at length for its revealing conspectus of the implications of what I have elsewhere called ‘medievalisation theory’:

Of the various conceptions of how a modern world society is likely to emerge from the anarchy of national sovereignties, two trends of thought deserve particular attention . . . One trend of thought is that prevalent since the First World War in the West European and English-speaking societies, which took the initiative in forming the League of Nations and the United Nations and which have gained much influence in many parts of the world. The other trend of thought is that of the societies that have viewed the predominance of the West European and English-speaking peoples as a threat to their independence and development. Within this second trend, the views of the communist leaders are the most fertile and enduring. The conception of the modern world prevalent in the advanced West European and English-speaking societies has assumed their initiative in the formation of international institutions, and the transformation of the world as a result of the widespread adoption of their values and institutions. This conception has its origins in the religious and social thought that was rooted in the medieval Christian Church . . . It was not until the catastrophe of the First World War, however, that this trend of thought can be said to have moved from the realm of speculation to that of practice. The view of the modern world that has its roots in the experience of advanced West European societies and their overseas heirs may be considered in terms of a theory of development . . . The theory of development places predominant emphasis on the political aspect of human activity. Historical change is seen in terms of a gradual transition from societies where the government is the master, through stages that vary somewhat from one theorist to another, to the final establishment of governments by the peoples themselves. This conception is firmly based on a constitutional experience that is described as ‘Western’ – incorporating as it does a considerable variety of systems – and that considers this experience to be of universal validity.¹²

The first of Black’s ‘two trends of thought’, the universalising ‘Western’ model of political development, is optimistic, forward-looking, and goal-oriented. The characteristics of the second, given much shorter shrift in Black’s analysis, are predictable enough: this view is pessimistic, paranoid, and retrenched, albeit ‘fertile and enduring’ with respect to its more recent proponents. This second trend culminates in a Marxist–Leninist worldview radically opposed to the ‘optimistic’ idiom of the Western model of development. As Black puts it, ‘This conception of a world communist society is

... based on the theories of Marx and Engels, but the original doctrine was particularly vague and general in regard to this question and much has been done by Lenin and his successors to elaborate with more precision the ultimate goal and the means by which it might be achieved.’¹³

More provocative than the ideological affiliations of these two views of modernisation postulated by Black, though, are their contrasting historical lineages. Unlike the first, ‘Western’ view, the communist view of modernisation has a fairly recent genealogy; its points of origin are murky, ambiguous, and suggestively non-European. The first view, by contrast, is, in Black’s phrase, ‘rooted in the medieval Christian Church’. To put it another way, the more modern, progressive view of how modernisation works is fundamentally indebted to the ‘religious and social thought’ of the European Middle Ages. What Black is proposing here, then, is that modernisation theory itself is in part the legacy of medieval Europe.

Such thinking has deep roots in modern economic thought. As far back as 1922, James Edward Meeker, in *The Work of the Stock Exchange*, had sought to align emerging models of socialist economics with the ‘local and primitive’ markets of the medieval world. Here, in a section of the book called ‘A Thought for Socialists’, Meeker offers a wry critique of socialism as neomedievalist regression:

In the Middle Ages – whose economic system evokes a curious partisanship among the socialists of today (perhaps because, for all their vaunted interest in the future, they are in reality several centuries behind the present era in many of their ideas) – there were no exchanges or markets except of the most local and primitive kind. Hence, only just enough goods were produced to satisfy the immediate local demand ... Both the modern capitalist system and the proposed neo-medieval socialistic system are thus necessarily speculative. They differ in that capitalism speculates in commodities, while socialism would speculate in human lives.¹⁴

Decades later, modernisation theory would extend this argument about the roots of modernity to an extreme. Not only does the medieval era model the right way to be modern, but it gives rise to a ‘realm of speculation’ in the Western tradition, as Black would put it – it births a theory of modernisation – that would finally be realised in the ‘realm of practice’ only in the twentieth century. Perversely, the Middle Ages itself has transmogrified into an ideological ally against communism. Modernisation theory *is* medievalisation theory.

‘The new medievalism’ and the non-state actor

It was to these complex and variegated appropriations of the medieval in Cold War modernisation theory that Hedley Bull would respond in

formulating the subfield of IR theory that has come to be called neomedievalism, or ‘the New Medievalism’. A theorist trained in the English realist school, Bull was one of the first prominent IR theorists to argue for the emerging challenge of non-state or post-state actors in a field dominated by nation- and state-centred approaches. Bull’s *The Anarchical Society: A Study of Order in World Politics* (1977), considered a realist classic of IR theory, outlined a series of ‘alternative paths to world order’, among them ‘world government’, a ‘disarmed world’, the ‘solidarity of states’ (the strengthening of the United Nations, for example), and other scenarios. The book proposed one particularly counter-intuitive model for ‘the future structure of world politics that could replace the system of sovereign states’:

It is . . . conceivable that sovereign states might disappear and be replaced not by a world government but by a modern and secular equivalent of the kind of universal political organization that existed in Western Christendom in the Middle Ages. In that system no ruler or state was sovereign in the sense of being supreme over a given territory and a given segment of the Christian population; each had to share authority with vassals beneath, and with the Pope and (in Germany and Italy) the Holy Roman Emperor above. The universal political order of Western Christendom represents an alternative to the system of states which does not yet embody universal government.

All authority in mediaeval Christendom was thought to derive ultimately from God and the political system was basically Theocratic. It might therefore seem fanciful to contemplate a return to the mediaeval model, but it is not fanciful to imagine that there might develop a modern and secular counterpart of it that embodies its central characteristic: a system of overlapping authority and multiple loyalty.¹⁵

Though Bull devoted just a few paragraphs to this ‘mediaeval model’ of post-state sovereignty, he invested it with deep implications for the nature of political formation in the modern world:

If modern states were to come to share their authority over their citizens, and their ability to command their loyalties, on the one hand with regional and world authorities, and on the other hand with substate or sub-national authorities, to such an extent that the concept of sovereignty ceased to be applicable, then a neo-mediaeval form of universal political order might be said to have emerged.¹⁶

The advantages of this neomedieval form, according to Bull, would include a ‘structure of overlapping authorities and crisscrossing loyalties’ that would avoid the danger of the states system while eluding the over-reach of world

government. The disadvantages could well include ‘more ubiquitous and continuous violence and insecurity’ than that existing under the modern states system.¹⁷

Following Bull’s proposal of a premodern turn in world politics, ‘The New Medievalism’ grew into an influential school of thought within IR theory, particularly following the demise of the Cold War in the early nineties. As one proponent described it, what is shared among neomedievalist theorists in IR is the recognition that ‘sovereignty is becoming more fluid. States are increasingly required to share power and authority with subnational units (such as vassals of old), supranational political entities (likened to a Holy Roman Empire), and powerful nongovernmental forces (analogous to the Roman Catholic Church)’.¹⁸ To reiterate a point made at the beginning of this chapter, as the almost offhand analogical idiom implies (‘such as’, ‘likened to’, ‘analogous to’), the neomedievalists make few claims to the historical veracity of the Middle Ages they propose as a model for the current state of affairs.¹⁹

This is a crucial point, for a key part of IR neomedievalism is located in the *neo*: Bull and other theorists are arguing not for a simple return of an archaic model of non-state action, but for the emergence of something fundamentally new that might helpfully be understood by historical analogy – and such analogies have proliferated in the past few decades. They can be found in academic studies of corporate militias, prominent articles in venues such as *Foreign Affairs* and the *Naval War College Review*, and speeches and working papers at the American Enterprise Institute. As the article cited in the opening paragraph suggests, neomedievalism has proliferated within and beyond the branch of the IR realism that initially developed it to become a powerful and quite persistent analytical model for the state of world political affairs in the contemporary era.

Empire and assemblage

Yet there are other ways of accounting for the endurance of supposedly medieval models of political relations in the modern world. I will close with two contemporary works of political theory that show us where such strands of neomedievalist thought have ended up in recent years. The first, Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri’s *Empire* (2000), was a highly controversial critique of imperialism that sought to theorise and account for the manifold energies of mobile populations within the contexts of globalisation and emergent transnational relations of power and population in the wake of the Cold War. Mixing political philosophy, theology, and postcolonial and Marxist theories of value, the book proposes an amorphous global network

of post-national sovereignties with surprising inheritances from the premodern world. *Empire's* eccentric variant of neomedievalism involves a return to several distinctive moments in premodern history: the fall of Rome and the resistance to empire represented by the northern barbarians; the processes of primitive accumulation and the birth of capitalism; and the rise of the mendicant orders in the thirteenth century, with the model of love and charity promised therein.

Hardt and Negri propose any number of historical analogies between the present domain of Empire and the Roman Empire that serves as its conceptual model. If Rome represents the initial attempt to theorise Empire, 'the birth of Christianity in Europe and its expansion during the decline of the Roman Empire' furnish models for fighting against it.²⁰ During the expansion of Christianity in the early Middle Ages, 'Empire was accepted as the "maturity of the times" . . . , but it was challenged in its totality by a completely different ethical and ontological axis.'²¹ This 'challenge' comes most compellingly from St. Augustine, whom the authors credit with conceptual and theoretical inspiration at least a dozen times in the course of *Empire*. The fourteen-page intermezzo on 'Counter-Empire', the centrepiece of the book, makes most explicit the motivation for the authors' enlistment of the Church Father:

Globalization must be met with a counter-globalization, Empire with a counter-Empire. In this regard we might take inspiration from Saint Augustine's vision of a project to contest the decadent Roman Empire. No limited community could succeed and provide an alternative to imperial rule; only a universal, catholic community bringing together all populations and all languages in a common journey could accomplish this.²²

Empire's deployment of Augustine (or at least a medievalising version of Augustine) needs to be understood at least in part in the context of a New Augustinianism prevalent in certain strains of criticism in the last decade of the twentieth century, particularly within the political-theological writings of radical orthodox theologians like Catherine Pickstock, John Milbank, and Graham Ward, who advocate a return to Augustine and his medieval legacy in the guise of a new Christian ethics. For these thinkers, Augustine seems to have answered a particular theological call at a moment of perceived transition between one geopolitical formation and another. As Hardt and Negri put it, 'The telos of the multitude must live and organize its political space against Empire and yet within the "maturity of the times" and the ontological conditions that Empire presents.'²³ 'Maturity of the times': the phrase, scare-quoted several times in *Empire*, is resonant with Augustine's sensibility late in life, when his own old age became indistinguishable from the *senectus*

mundi, the ‘world grown old’ around him, as he remarked in a sermon written shortly after the sack of Rome: ‘The world is passing away, the world is losing its grip, the world is short of breath.’²⁴

The book’s Augustinian idiom crescendoes in part 4 of *Empire*, which is given the title ‘The Decline and Fall of Empire’, appropriated from Edward Gibbon’s *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, a classic of eighteenth-century historical writing. Here Hardt and Negri exhibit all of Gibbon’s apocalyptic fervour with virtually none of his pessimism:

Empire creates a greater potential for revolution than did the modern regimes of power because it presents us, alongside the machine of command, with an alternative: the set of all the exploited and the subjugated, a multitude that is directly opposed to Empire, with no mediation between them. At this point, then, as Augustine says, our task is to discuss, to the best of our powers, ‘the rise, the development and the destined ends of the two cities ... which we find ... interwoven ... and mingled with one another’. Now that we have dealt extensively with Empire, we should focus directly on the multitude and its potential political power.²⁵

What is this ‘multitude’? If Augustine models the theoretical edifice sustaining ‘the multitude against Empire’, the against-in-practice receives its neo-medievalist guise in the bodies and actions of the Goths, these ‘new barbarians’ (214), the subject and title of another section of the book: ‘Those who are against, while escaping from the local and particular constraints of their human condition, must also continually attempt to construct a new body and a new life. ... The new barbarians destroy with an affirmative violence and trace new paths of life through their own material existence.’²⁶ This counter-imperialism of the ‘multitude’ operates through a series of what Hardt and Negri call ‘barbaric deployments’ aimed at refiguring political relations, both at the boundaries and at the centres of Empire.

One of the most crucial of these ‘passages of production’ is represented by another neomedieval formation, the ‘modern processes of primitive accumulation’. If Marx placed the origins of primitive accumulation in English localities of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, Hardt and Negri want to see this process as part of the current ideological work of Empire: ‘As we pass from modernity to postmodernity, the processes of primitive accumulation do indeed continue’, though by means of different mechanisms; primitive accumulation in its global, imperial frame entails new mobilisations of ‘social relations, communication systems, information, and affective networks’, all now embraced by the accumulative impulses of capital rooted in late medieval England and the Statutes of Laborers discussed in *Capital*.

Here Hardt and Negri are writing history apocalyptically: 'In postmodernity the social wealth accumulated is increasingly immaterial', and what has taken its place the authors call 'informational accumulation', which in turn 'destroys or at least destructures the previously existing productive processes'.²⁷

Nowhere do the neomedievalist inventions of *Empire* appear more clearly than in the book's final paragraph, a concluding panegyric to St. Francis of Assisi (the italics are the authors'):

*There is an ancient legend that might serve to illuminate the future life of communist militancy: that of Saint Francis of Assisi. Consider his work. To denounce the poverty of the multitude he adopted that common condition and discovered there the ontological power of a new society. The communist militant does the same, identifying in the common condition of the multitude its enormous wealth. Francis in opposition to nascent capitalism refused every instrumental discipline, and in opposition to the mortification of the flesh (in poverty and in the constituted order) he posed a joyous life, including all of being and nature, the animals, sister moon, brother sun, the birds of the field, the poor and exploited humans, together against the will of power and corruption. Once again in postmodernity we find ourselves in Francis's situation, posing against the misery of power the joy of being. This is a revolution that no power will control – because biopower and communism, cooperation and revolution remain together, in love, simplicity, and also innocence. This is the irrepressible lightness and joy of being communist.*²⁸

This culminating passage proposes the thirteenth-century rise of Franciscan mendicancy as a foreshadowing of the postmodern redirection of communist militancy in the masses organising both within and against *Empire*. *Empire* thus concludes by arguing for an almost typological re-enactment of the origins and spread of mendicant poverty and religiosity as conceptual models for the counter-imperial radicalism of the present. 'This inside is the productive cooperation of mass intellectuality and affective networks, the productivity of postmodern biopolitics. This militancy makes resistance into counterpower and makes rebellion into a project of love.'²⁹ However much *Empire* renders its argument in terms of the economic and technological globalisations, post-industrial formations of value and exchange, and newly transnational relations of labour shaping the present, the future to which it aspires will embrace all of these within a renewal of medieval affective spirituality in its Franciscan incarnation; a coming politics of *caritas* will embody within the Empire of the future a resistant love revived from the medieval past.

We get a much less idealised version of neomedievalism in relation to post-national sovereignties in Saskia Sassen's *Territory, Authority, Rights: From*

Medieval to Global Assemblages (2006), a widely cited treatise in international political economy. Unlike Hardt and Negri's *Empire* or, indeed, Bull's *The Anarchical Society*, Sassen's study delves quite deeply into the processes of medieval statecraft and political formation, with a sweeping overview of the history and historiography of premodern cities, institutions, and bureaucracies. One of her motivations in turning to medieval forms of political assemblage is to find historical sources for the later parts of the book that theorise the 'dislodging of national capabilities that ... is at work in constituting the global'.³⁰ Like the New Medievalism, then, Sassen's study poaches liberally from a wide variety of medievalist scholarship and historical socio-logies of the Middle Ages. For example, the book brings together Max Weber and Henri Pirenne on the dynamism of medieval towns and cities to study the 'political economy of urban territoriality'; as Sassen puts it, the 'cities and intercity mobilities' of the Middle Ages 'constituted a larger networked territorial formation, one arising from the ground up, which eventually functioned as a built-in capability for the emergent territorialities of national states'.³¹ Particularly important to her study of these territorialities is the formation of Capetian governance in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, and here her analysis is informed by a generous embrace of scholarship on medieval statecraft and jurisdiction. The Capetians 'implemented key elements of a centralized bureaucracy that created a grid for partial control over what was a sharply fragmented territorial and political organization with many actors far more powerful than the king'.³²

For Sassen, such factors speak to what she identifies as four 'medieval capabilities for the development of the territorial state' crucial to understanding the emergence of modern forms of government and jurisdiction – yet also crucial to their unravelling in the global age. These capabilities arise from and reflect several aspects of medieval political assemblages: (1) the 'fact of inferior power', which allows us to envision the immense effort it took on the part of medieval sovereigns 'to assemble the territories, authorities, and rights that would eventually coalesce into national units'; (2) the emergence of a 'state bureaucracy for extracting revenue,' particularly the 'work of setting up a technocratic system' and the ancillary capacities it entailed; (3) the development of 'abstract forms of authority, to be distinguished from raw material power' and embracing notions of divine authority as well as the 'secular and constitutional systems of law' arising from city-state and town formation in the eleventh and twelfth centuries; and (4) the 'political economy of urban territoriality,' realised in what Sassen calls 'a series of networks with highly variable territorial insertions and levels of institutionalization'. All of these medieval capabilities become important factors in the emergence of sovereign nation-states, even as they provide in

some ways the seeds of their transformation into the global assemblages theorised later in the book. Sassen's *Territory, Authority, and Rights* thus recapitulates one of the central neomedievalist modes found in modernisation theory, despite its effort to move beyond the East–West binary informing the IR theory of the Cold War. The medieval assemblages postulated here are specifically Western European assemblages; their theoretical work for Sassen derives from their neomedievalist appropriation as discrete fragments of a past unmoored from the epoch that gave them historical coherence.

Conclusions

As the examples treated here suggest, neomedievalism represents a diverse and ever-changing part of the theoretical idiom of international relations and modernisation studies. For decades, scholars in certain corners of these and related fields have enlisted neomedievalist political rhetorics, social formations, and historiographical models to elaborate everything from the character of socialist economics to the aspirations of international labour and environmental movements. While some of these appropriations have proved more successful or influential than others, there can be little doubt that neomedievalism is here to stay, and that the various modellings it has proposed have, for better or worse, been thoroughly absorbed into the language and logic of globalisation. Like other modes of medievalism in the modern world, the neomedievalism idiom will continue to have important bearing on how we comprehend our geopolitical relation to the medieval past and how we understand the emergent and residual forces shaping our future in a global age.

NOTES

1. Parag Khanna, 'Neomedievalism: The World is Fragmenting, Badly. Gird Yourself for a New Dark Age', *Foreign Policy* 172 (May–June 2009): 91.
2. Harry Brown, 'Baphomet Incorporated: A Case Study in Neomedievalism', *Defining Neomedievalism(s)* vol. II, ed. Karl Fugelso, special issue of *Studies in Medievalism* XX (2011): 1.
3. Stanley Rothman, *European Society and Politics* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1969), 195.
4. John Herz, *International Politics in an Atomic Age* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959), 44–45.
5. Herz, *International Politics*, 49.
6. For more on Strayer's relationship to IR theory and his work with the CIA, see the extended discussion in Bruce Holsinger, 'Medievalization Theory: From Tocqueville to the Cold War', *American Literary History* 22 (2010): 896–900.
7. Talcott Parsons, *The System of Modern Societies* (New York: Prentice, 1971), 36.

8. Cyril E. Black, *The Dynamics of Modernization* (New York: Harper, 1968), 8.
9. Black, *Dynamics*, 8.
10. Black, *Dynamics*, 19.
11. Black, *Dynamics*, 20.
12. Black, *Dynamics*, 139–140.
13. Black, *Dynamics*, 142.
14. Joseph Edward Meeker, *The Work of the Stock Exchange* (New York: The Ronald Press Company, 1922), 384–385.
15. Hedley Bull, *The Anarchical Society: A Study of Order in World Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1977), 245.
16. Bull, *The Anarchical Society*, 254–255.
17. Bull, *The Anarchical Society*, 246.
18. David J. Bederman, *The Spirit of International Law* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2002), 92.
19. On the weakness of analogy in historical thinking about contemporary politics, see Gabrielle Spiegel, “‘Getting Medieval’: History and the Torture Memos”, originally published in 2008 in *Perspectives on History*, the newsmagazine of the American Historical Association; now available at www.historians.org/publications-and-directories/perspectives-on-history/september-2008/getting-medieval-history-and-the-torture-memos.
20. Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), 21.
21. Hardt and Negri, *Empire*, 21.
22. Hardt and Negri, *Empire*, 207.
23. Hardt and Negri, *Empire*, 407.
24. Cited in Peter Brown, *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1967), 296.
25. Hardt and Negri, *Empire*, 393.
26. Hardt and Negri, *Empire*, 214–215.
27. Hardt and Negri, *Empire*, 257–258.
28. Hardt and Negri, *Empire*, 413.
29. Hardt and Negri, *Empire*, 413.
30. Saskia Sassen, *Territory, Authority, Rights: From Medieval to Global Assemblages* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), 5.
31. Sassen, *Territory, Authority, Rights*, 73.
32. Sassen, *Territory, Authority, Rights*, 46.

Global medievalism and translation

In August 2012, the Edinburgh Fringe Festival premiered Ufuoma Overo-Tarimo's play, *Wahala Dey O!*¹ Set in twenty-first-century Lagos and studded with Nigerian pidgin English, it tells the story of a middle-class household: a jealous, unsophisticated husband; his young, free-spending wife; her clandestine, in-house lover; and a pair of mischievous, nosy servants. Two years later, a Reykjavik performance framed the play as the contribution by a character named Miller Rabiú to a tale-telling exchange during one of Lagos' familiar blackouts; a group of stranded hotel guests – politicians, nuns, scholars, musicians, and businessmen – shared stories and drank cocktails, while waiting for the electricity to return.² Viewers familiar with Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales* will already suspect that Miller Rabiú, like his Chaucerian model, is very drunk and that his tale's lovers successfully dupe the befuddled husband. Beyond supplying a comic narrative, the Chaucerian source provides *Wahala Dey O!* with a powerful nexus of canonical tropes. Not the usual academic reconstruction that seeks 'to freeze the past, reify it, and protect it from the present', *Wahala Dey O!* creatively appropriates a medieval British text in order to comment on the challenges facing Nigerians and to suggest the combination of indigenous and imported cultural traditions enlivening and sustaining Lagos' residents.³ By translating an icon of medieval English culture into a twenty-first-century Nigerian context and setting it on a global stage, Overo-Tarimo taps into *global medievalism*, the resurrection of medieval culture in post-medieval times outside the limits of Western Europe; she thereby creates a dialogic transfer between a European medieval past and a non-European present. (see Figure 13).

Global medievalisms like Overo-Tarimo's add another link in the long chain of *translatio imperii et studii*; this medieval concept explaining how medieval culture imagined its relationship to ancient predecessors can also be used to explain how medieval culture has been transmitted into twenty-first-century global culture. The concept of *translatio imperii et studii* conjoins the ways that conquest and culture often come together as a package. Drawing

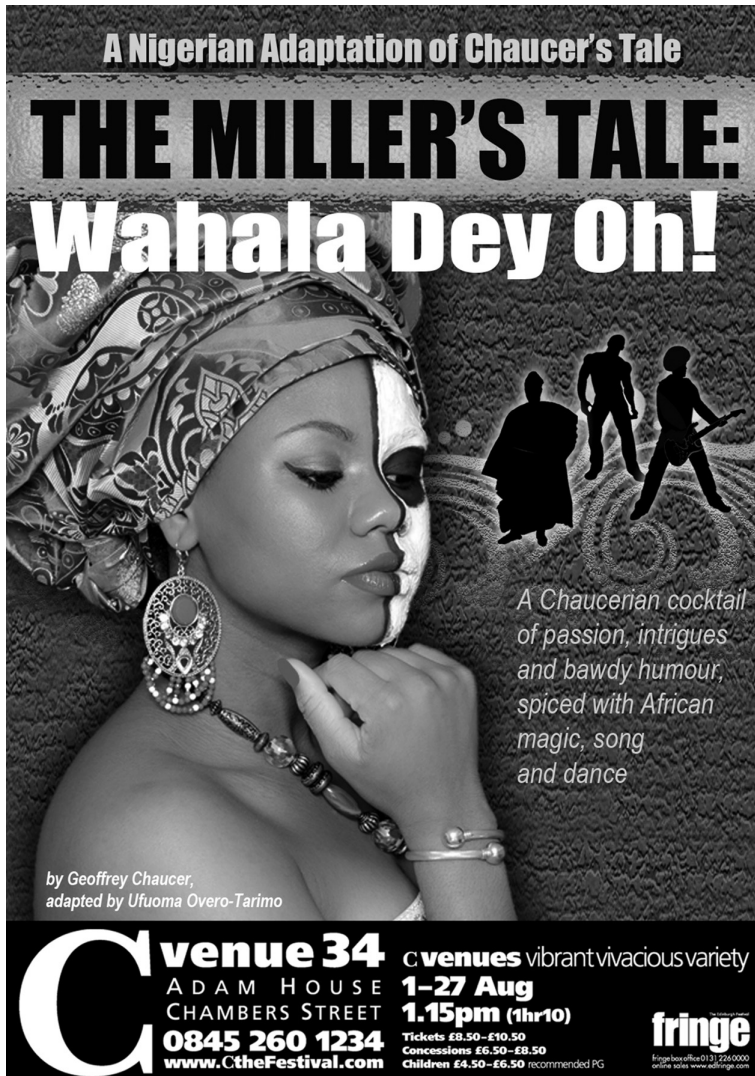


Figure 13 *Wahala Dey O!* Official poster for Edinburgh Fringe Festival performance. Reproduced with permission of Ufuoma Overo-Tarimo.

on the multiple denotations embedded in *translatio* – to transport from one time period to another, to carry from one place to another, to move from one language to another – *translatio imperii et studii* explained how ancient Greek learning was absorbed and refined by the conquering Romans, then spread across the centuries throughout Europe as Roman Christendom displaced Germanic paganism. When Europeans established colonies on every

continent, *translatio* reappeared and was felt most acutely where those colonies became settler colonies and colonists brought their native European culture with them. In the United States, Canada, and Australasia, British culture became the standard against which the homegrown culture measured itself. In Quebec, it was French culture; in Brazil, Portuguese; and in the rest of Central and South America, Spanish. These European cultural and linguistic ties provided a Western-European basis for newly elite cultures in the former colonies. Following the centuries-old *translatio* traditions, settlers displaced the perceived barbarisms of frontier culture with the Christian sureties of Europe. This modern *translatio* ensured the imported dramas of Shakespeare and Sophocles were part of the settlers' domesticated diet, while the indigenous tales of the Narragansett, Apache, Iroquois, Inca, Inuit, Aboriginal, and other native peoples were exotic fare for transplanted Europeans, suiting neither their sensibilities nor their palates. Repeatedly, European cultures supplanted indigenous ones and were treated as if they were native, though they were, in fact, in lands far from European shores.

Medieval non-religious texts were not initially included in the European culture transported to the New World. During colonial expansion's first 300 years, the books accompanying conquest were primarily religious, such as Bibles, devotionals, and theological tracts. After Romanticism reclaimed the Middle Ages in the nineteenth century, however, medievalism in the form of such novels and verse as Scott's *Ivanhoe* and Wordsworth's Chaucerian translations were exported and widely read beyond European shores. Before long, medieval books – and eventually other remnants of medieval material culture – became frequent stowaways. In this way, European colonial regimes spread medieval legend and literature across the globe, with new medievalisms emerging in the cultures of the Americas, Africa, and Asia, the result of indigenous and European traditions intermingling.⁴

Embedded in the Romantics' appropriation of the medieval in various European countries was a deep nationalist nostalgia, encompassing both 'longing and critique'.⁵ On the one hand, this nationalism was an inward-looking quest to heal a nation's people fragmented by industrialisation and contaminated by foreign influences. Artists and politicians alike found in the Middle Ages the balm of a common, premodern language and medieval virtues – chivalric honour, religious faith, enlightened rationality, and honest creativity – that neatly corresponded with modern values; when Tennyson reimaged the Arthurian legend in *Idylls of the King* (1842–1885) and Wagner reconceived Germany's national epic in *Der Ring Des Nibelungen* (1848–1874), they were tapping into this affirmative strain. On the other hand, nationalist medievalism was also an outward-focused attitude for judging outsiders. Energised by early modern prejudices against the Middle

Ages, 'medieval' provided an ever-ready set of pejorative associations that could be used to tar alien peoples and enemy nations: barbaric violence, irrational religiosity, intellectual stagnation, and artistic naiveté. (In fact, these derogatory senses carry the original meaning of 'medieval'.⁶) The Middle Ages were simultaneously elevated as the wellspring of eternal, national virtues and debased as the ash heap of smouldering, alien vices. When medieval texts (and those inspired by medieval ideas) were carried to colonies old and new, the ambivalences travelled abroad as well.

These persistent ambivalences shape medievalism's global reach, allowing it to translate medieval tropes across chronological gaps, geographical distances, and linguistic differences. Not limited to seeing the European medieval past as a mirror for interpreting contemporaneous European culture, global medievalism goes beyond nationalist medievalism and uses the European medieval past as prism for interpreting, shaping, and binding cultures outside the Western European nation-states. Deploying medievalism's simultaneous nostalgia and loathing for the past, Europeans could imagine themselves as embodying medieval virtues while attributing medieval vices to outsiders. This same double move then becomes available when non-Europeans appropriate Europe's medieval past. Generally, global appropriations of medieval Europe have been subsumed under the broader categories of colonialism and orientalism. While I will attend to these phenomena, I find they blur important distinctions. For this reason, I will consider global medievalisms as operating in three primary modes parallel to the three denotations embedded in *translatio*: temporal, spatial, and linguistic. Primarily, these three modes are distinguished by the relationship to medieval Europe that the ones deploying the medievalism claim. Though these three modes do not account for all instances of global medievalism, they do allow a useful way to see what Michelle R. Warren calls 'the stealthy work of medievalizing discourse'.⁷

Examining the case of Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales*, we will see how each mode of global medievalism foregrounds its 'contrapuntal co-presence' with the European Middle Ages, thereby granting us a means for understanding the dialogue between medieval and post-medieval texts.⁸ Not only will these three modes help us understand how Chaucer's Oxbridge Robin the Miller becomes Overo-Tarimo's Nigerian Miller Rabiū, but, in ways that might initially surprise, they bring us to an understanding of Chaucer's *Tales* we might not otherwise recognise.

Temporal global medievalism occurs when modern European cultures use medievalism as a prism for understanding coeval non-Western cultures. For global medievalism (as with other medievalisms), translating across time means either casting the present in terms of the medieval past or redefining

the medieval past in terms of the modern present. In both cases, temporal translation places the Middle Ages in synchronous rather than chronological relationship to the modern. As orientalism studies have highlighted, this synchronicity has, to some extent, paradoxical limits. Thus, where medievalism can be used to bring the medieval to the modern or the modern to the medieval (making them, in effect, coterminous), 'medieval' cannot be accurately applied to all cultures contemporaneous with the European Middle Ages; that is, the term 'medieval' – bearing as it often does the stigma of being pre-Enlightenment – does not accurately describe the years c.700–1500 in African, American, Asian, or Australasian history. For many regions, these were years of great cultural achievement, cut short not by internal decay but by European colonisation and empire building, activities (not coincidentally) concomitant with the early modern creation of the 'medieval' as a category for locating the abject.⁹ Consequently, we cannot blithely label as 'medieval' all cultures in all places during the period between 700 and 1500. As Nadia Altschul succinctly states, 'the Middle Ages is not a global historical time . . . but a local European time span'.¹⁰ When I refer to something as 'medieval', I limit my reference to people, places, texts, and artefacts associated with the European Middle Ages. And as a further corollary, my use of the term 'global medievalism' (no matter which of the three types) refers to the reception of that same European Middle Ages. While this limitation might seem to privilege a Eurocentric vantage, in fact it de-centres the European model as the one by which the rest of the world's cultures are understood. Indeed, by acknowledging that non-Western cultures such as China and Persia have temporalities independent of Europe, we recognise that European history is not the measure to judge histories and cultures of other geographical regions.¹¹

Temporal global medievalism is like nationalist medievalism (from which it derives) in that it looks backward in time, originates at home, celebrates the European vernacular, and, as Richard Utz argues in this volume, harbours an imperialist impulse. With its mixture of orientalism and colonialism, the temporal variety sharpens these features of nationalist medievalism when it looks outwards and interprets other cultures that do not share a Western European medieval heritage. Temporal global medievalism promotes European history as the primary means of understanding global history, and it gives Western Europe the privileged place of providing the authoritative reading of the past. (Efforts to define the rest of the world in terms of European chronologies and developmental frameworks are obvious examples.) Because this form of global medievalism appears at the height of European colonial expansion, it helped justify and explain colonial expansion.¹² This form of global medievalism uses medievalism to

imagine two coeval cultures as occupying two different time zones or historical chronologies. The Western European is considered to occupy the modern 'now', while others are perceived as occupying a medieval 'then', a dark age from which Western Europe emerged in the sixteenth century but where others will always be stuck without Western European intervention.¹³ In the temporal mode, medievalism divides the world by time, with the West (as variously defined) part of a European continuum and the East (another restless category) relegated to a temporal realm always developmentally behind the West.

Temporal global medievalism results from a cross-fertilisation of medievalism, orientalism, and colonialism. When nineteenth-century Englishmen headed to India, Sir Walter Scott's *Ivanhoe* (1820) – one of the most influential texts of nationalist medievalism, with knights setting off on a crusade in service to their king – provided events and characters for understanding and glorifying the British Empire's expansionist mission. Just as this medievalising impulse explained to Englishmen their privilege, so it explained to the Indians their subjugation: the benighted Indians required conquest in order to be Christianised and enfolded into modernity. Once they controlled India, the British again employed temporal medievalism, this time to rewrite the subcontinent's history. Dividing that history into three periods – the Hindu, Muslim, and British – and labelling those periods as ancient, medieval, and modern, the British justified their conquest as not only delivering India from the woes of a tyrannous and degenerate medieval period but also as bringing the Indian people to the joys of a beneficent and enlightened modern period. Thomas Babington Macaulay, who served on the Supreme Council of India (1834–1838), reified this interpretation in his education policies by positioning the British colonisers as analogous to the classical tradition that released England out of medieval darkness and sprung it into the light of the Renaissance; England's enlightened present would provide the way for India to reach its own enlightened period. Macaulay's goal was to eradicate not the Indian people but their culture, which he portrayed as developmentally delayed by several centuries. In his model, Indians would retain their blood and colour – and thus remain irremediably abject – but be changed inwardly by English values and culture. As India's example suggests, when Europeans use medievalism as a prism for looking at others beyond their national frontiers, they associate Westerners with positive qualities of the medieval past, such as chivalry, honour, whiteness, and Christianity, while associating indigenous cultures with its negative qualities, such as barbarism, treachery, darkness, and heathenism.

This temporal mode of global medievalism continues to be a way of justifying such global aggressions as slavery, colonial expansion, imperialist

subjugation, and immigrant restrictions. Situated among the ‘ideologically laden’ temporalities identified by Stephanie Trigg in this volume, temporal global medievalism frames the ways dominant Western cultures perceive those outside its privileged circle. Similar to orientalisng, it casts non-European cultures as pre-Enlightenment, forever stuck in a dark past from which Western cultures emerged in the sixteenth century and continue to progress into modernity and the future. Since the turn of the twenty-first century, this demeaning form of medievalism has been used within Europe to marginalise immigrants, outsiders whose religion and ethnicity threaten to spoil Europeans’ alleged religious and racial purity. Today, headlines continue to label religious extremists and lawless behaviour as ‘medieval’, and the term remains among the most derogatory labels a politician can plaster on an enemy. In this medievalism’s framework, contemporaneous non-European cultures exist in an asynchronic medieval past, a move that infantilises the alien culture. This process becomes a way not only to affiliate others with Europe’s abjected past and to segregate them from Europe’s current glories, but also to assert Europe’s superiority over other cultures.¹⁴ Unlike nationalist medievalism, which brings the past forward in an effort to make it intelligible, temporal global medievalism forces the contemporaneous into the past to make it manageable.

In temporal global medievalism, Chaucer’s role is more subtle than that of other medievalised texts. The *Tales* are among the literary selections populating anthologies found in colonial classrooms and parlour tables, and his *Tales* would have been among the Early English Text Society (EETS) volumes stocking the British Empire’s libraries and schools by the mid-nineteenth century, appearing, it seems, in Indian colonial school curricula 50 years before appearing in England’s curricula.¹⁵ To make Chaucer compatible with the prevailing ethos, editions retaining the Middle English original included glosses pointing away from scurrilous elements; modernising English translations handled the problem through more misdirection and omission. Though attentive readers could have noted the evil Saracens in *The Man of Law’s Tale* and the exotic intrigue of the Mongol court in *The Squire’s Tale*, nineteenth-century editions of Chaucer’s *Tales* present carefully chosen and skilfully glossed pilgrims refashioned as earnest exemplars of sturdy middle-class values and British fortitude. From the tales themselves, Chaucerian excerpts offered not a reservoir of villainous characters for tarring indigenous peoples, but static set pieces providing moral and patriotic edification: from *The Prioress’s Tale*, one learnt devotion to family; from *The Knight’s Tale*, martial duty.¹⁶ In these ways, the *Tales* contributed to England’s efforts to establish itself as the cultural norm against which all other literary and cultural artefacts must be judged.

Spatial global medievalism occurs when (former) settler colonies reclaim medieval literature and material culture, thereby allowing regions outside Western Europe to imagine themselves natural inheritors of the medieval past. Like temporal global medievalism, the spatial mode uses medievalism to understand cultures beyond the geographical territory of Western Europe. Unlike the temporal mode, the spatial is created only by cultures not geographically situated in Western Europe. It is first found in settler colonies populated with large numbers of European immigrants forming a creole elite who control the region's government and culture. Because these colonised spaces continue to share a language with colonising Europe, they can see themselves as natural extensions of Europe, thereby appropriating medieval Europe and its culture as their own. Thus English speakers in North America and Australasia consider themselves Britain's linguistic and cultural heirs, though they live in locales with indigenous languages and histories very different from England's, differences that widen exponentially in the centuries before 1500. Medievalism's tropes contribute to the perceived continuity between Europe and its settler colonies. Even though each locale responds to the tropes in distinctive ways, the common point of contact creates a continuity across a global span. For example, in Australian artist Eugene von Guérard's 1867 image, *South End of Tasman's Island*, visual tropes of medieval castles filter his depiction of Tasmanian rock formations, while those same visual tropes shaped Colorado's Miramont Castle (1895), whose shallow design (barely two rooms deep) was determined by the rock face that forms its back wall (see Figure 14)¹⁷.

Such medievalism thrived in distant lands because it allows the creole elite to position themselves as part of an historical continuum that begins with the European Middle Ages, thereby making them legitimate heirs to European cultural capital and the privileges that accompany its claims to modernity. Demonstrating their common European origins, medievalism allows the creoles both to redeem their cultural exile from Europe's metropolitan centres and to establish themselves as the next link in the *translatio imperii and studii* chain with two further advantages. First, as we saw with temporal global medievalism, claiming a European heritage via the medieval past allows creoles access to the bifurcated valence of 'medieval', creating a way to transfer the derogatory label to others and thereby legitimise the subjection of indigenous peoples, the discrimination of ethnic minorities, and the pursuit of global power. Second, turning to the medieval past allows creoles to distinguish themselves from their European antecedents: sometimes to demonstrate pre-industrial purity, sometimes to proclaim industrial prowess.¹⁸

Because imaginative geographical continuities allow distant lands to perceive themselves as sharing a material and intellectual history with Europe



Figure 14 Eugene von Guérard, *South End of Tasman's Island*, 1867. Reproduced with permission from the Allport Library and Museum of Fine Arts, Tasmanian Archive and Heritage Office.

and with one another, they became linked with the spatial label, 'the West'. Beyond distinguishing the West from the East or the South, the label also excluded Eastern Europe (geographically contiguous with Western Europe) and South America (a former European settler colony), which might otherwise claim membership to the metropole.¹⁹ Medievalism helps the Americas and Australasia be imagined as natural extensions of Europe. This imaginative geographic unity depends upon and perpetuates the tendency of former settler colonies to consider their history on a natural continuum with Europe's, especially in eras pre-dating colonisation, and this shifted perspective continues even as these colonies became former colonies. Therefore, in the nineteenth century, the Anglo-Saxons loomed larger in North America's cultural heritage than did the indigenous Ojibwes, and the medieval stone masons' guild provided a more significant cultural touchstone in Australia than did Aboriginal corroborees. Because medievalism can imaginatively bridge great geographical divides when the medieval past is translated from Western Europe to its former settler colonies, it contributes to the appearance of a solid geographical block. For this reason, 'the West' serves as a convenient (if not fully accurate) shorthand for identifying the resulting cross-spatial union between Western Europe and its former settler colonies.

We see these dual advantages at work as medieval tropes were translated across the spatial divide. Never treated as sacrosanct, medieval elements were isolated, re-proportioned, and reinvented, allowing cultural dynamics to confer new meanings on the claimed inheritance. De-historicised allusions

to the Middle Ages transplanted to New World history simultaneously erased the history and ancient traditions of the indigenous people and filled in the blank with a European one. In Australia, when medieval martial values were paraded by the United Knights of Labor, a twofold historical amnesia was allowed – one denying the indigenous past, the other disavowing Australia's early history as a penal colony.²⁰ In the United States, the history of New York City becomes less about the indigenous tribes who occupied it for centuries and more about the Europeans who took possession of it. Manhattan's Gothic-style structures built since the nineteenth century – churches, public buildings, universities, and homes – not only assert continuity with Europe's medieval past but also proclaim the triumph of capitalism and modern building techniques and steel construction. Philadelphia's mummers and Brooklyn's *giglio* dance transplanted and reconfigured Old World rituals to New World urban contexts, simultaneously privileging one ethnic tradition while supplanting other competing ones. No matter how altered to meet new contexts and seemingly incompatible demands, the medieval provided a source of authenticity and authority.²¹

Similar slippage can be found in Chaucer's reception. In the early nineteenth century, his tales were susceptible to greater bowdlerising in the (former) colonies than in Britain. Early versions of *The Canterbury Tales* published for readers in the United States selectively eliminate *The Miller's Tale's* sexual escapades, the Wife of Bath's forthright confession, as well as most signs of the *Tales'* pre-Protestant origins. They emphasise those tales that feature suffering virtue, such as Constance in *The Man of Law's Tale* and Griselda in *The Clerk's Tale*, thereby creating a set of moral, upright tales with virtuous women in the nineteenth-century mould. Other Chaucerian adaptations, such as the misattributed 'Mercy', articulate and normalise the American imperial argument that its frontier and other distant territories need to be subjugated and brought into the Western fold.²²

Since World War II's end, the *Tales'* Anglophone reception seems to have elided the fact that England and the former colonies have distinct relationships to English's literary past. Editions, scholarship, and academic societies make only minor adjustments for different Anglophone audiences. Perhaps the turning point was F. N. Robinson's 1933 edition of *The Complete Works of Geoffrey Chaucer*, replete with Explanatory Notes (emphasising scholarship recently produced in the United States), making it the edition indispensable to scholars worldwide.²³ In addition to declaring its independence from and displacing the British academy as the dominant purveyor of Chaucerian interpretations, the edition fashioned itself as collecting and disseminating established facts, thereby exuding the sense of a globally unified field of study.

Linguistic global medievalism occurs when non-Western cultures appropriate medieval texts for their own purposes, thereby moving from being the target of medievalism to being the transmitter and beneficiary of medievalism. Rather than the linguistic modernisation of medieval texts – the inward looking, intra-lingual movement from Old French to Modern French, Middle High German to Modern German, or Middle English to Modern English – global medievalism highlights translating from a dominant language to a marginal one. This process has the tendency of further redefining the cross-temporal, cross-spatial nature of global medievalism. Of the major languages associated with Western medieval culture, English is the one that has become a dominant global language, so it most frequently provides global medievalism's source text. Consequently, when language is factored in, the geographical divide shifts to one between the Anglophone West and everyone else. When I speak of linguistic translation, therefore, my references are primarily from English (either its late-medieval or present-day standard forms) to non-Anglophone languages and non-standard English.

Linguistic global medievalism allows cultures not considering themselves direct descendants of the European heritage to appropriate medieval texts. In addition to the geographic and chronological translation required by the first two modes, these medievalised texts invariably require linguistic translation, which removes the linguistic affiliation that so easily compresses geographical space and occludes difference. Because these texts cannot rely on either geographical or linguistic continuity, they can be studied as forms of medievalism closing the chronological and geographical gap by appropriating medieval tropes and conveying them in another language. In this type of global medievalism, translations become 'feral', roaming the planet untethered to their European home culture and refusing to be tamed by historical, cultural, and ideological categories generally delimited by the term 'medieval'.²⁴ These texts are not to be judged on their fidelity to the medieval source but should be approached for what they reveal about the receiving culture, about medievalism, and about the originating medieval text.

After having been the target of temporal global medievalism's negative assessments, these non-Anglophone and marginal cultures use translation to upend both temporal and spatial modes of global medievalism, thereby unmaking the post-Enlightenment legacy of orientalism, colonialism, and empire. Whereas the temporal mode had relegated non-European cultures to the irremediable medieval past, these medievalisms frequently translate the West into the abject other. They can do this linguistically and culturally. They create for themselves a medieval past, often by using an archaic form of the receiving language; that usually means finding an equivalent to the European medieval in the language spoken at the point of orientalising or

colonialising abjection. They also reshape the European perspective to suit their local realities. Thus, Natsumi Sōseki's *Kairo-kō* (1905) rewrites the Arthurian legend, readily changing events and characterisations found in Malory. Sōseki challenges and complicates English literature's hegemony by adding stock elements from Japanese legends. By mingling East and West, Sōseki's novel is not subservient to the West but subversive, for it became the means by which he established his reputation as a significant Japanese novelist.²⁵ The medieval texts, codes, and artefacts are translated into a new language and into cultural codes quite foreign to the European Middle Ages. Medieval European tropes are dressed in the clothes and language of the receiving culture. In other words, these linguistic translations posit an alternative to the post-Enlightenment West, one that does not presuppose a teleology pointing to an inevitable modernity and western dominance.

Simultaneously, these translations also demonstrate that there are many rightful heirs to the Middle Ages by illustrating affinities between the European past and the receiving culture. In addition to Sōseki's Japanese appropriation of the Arthurian material are numerous re-imaginings of the distinctly British medieval narrative, including Alvaro Cunqueiro's Spanish *Merlín y familia* (1955, 1957), Italo Calvino's Italian *Il cavaliere inesistente* (1959), Maria Kuncewicz's Polish *Tristan* (1974), and Pierre-Jakez Hélias's Breton *An Isild A-Heul* (1965).²⁶ By reconceiving King Arthur, his companions, and their exploits in other languages and on other soils, these appropriations diminish the nationalist and nativist impulses of medievalism and replace those impulses with a cosmopolitan impulse. The European medieval does not dominate or define; it joins a stew of other cultures and other languages. It does not provide the only past; it presents one of many possible pasts. By studying these temporally, spatially, and linguistically remediated versions of the European past, Westerners can begin to relinquish the Eurocentric notion that all other cultures should be – even desire to be – measured by Western European standards.

In this third type, Chaucer is recruited once again as a global literary figure via translations and imaginative appropriations. Some translations, by allowing the Chaucerian voice to embody the old ways, recreate the *Tales* in the voice of the colonial abject. Nazmi Ağıl's Turkish *Canterbury Hikâyeleri* (1994) domesticates Chaucer's text with Turkish oral folktales and idioms he learnt from his grandfather and heard on the radio.²⁷ By reimagining Chaucer's Christian voice as an old-fashioned Islamic one, he creates a text sympathetic to contemporary Turks while also projecting an equivalence between Britain's medieval past and Turkey's pre-Atatürk past. Similarly, José Francisco Botelho's Chaucerian voice speaks a Brazilian Portuguese associated with the south of his country, far from the urban

modernity of São Paulo or Rio de Janeiro, and where the old *cavalheiro* of the pampas still sits around telling tales and dispensing wisdom.²⁸ *Contos da Cantuária* (2013) combines well-known proverbs, *decassílabo* (a traditional Portuguese verse form), *ríma toante* (a low-status rhyme scheme), and *pajada* (oral poetry from southern Brazil) to create a new language for conveying Brazil's fictional Middle Ages. Both translations, the Turkish and the Brazilian–Portuguese, re-imagine the European past in ways that elevate a culture subjected to orientalising or colonialising; at the same time they deflate the West's pretentious projections of inevitable modernity.

Most importantly, these translations argue their right to claim a medieval heritage by demonstrating how well they hear and make use of Chaucer's voice. When John Boje translates *The Canterbury Tales* into Afrikaans, Chaucer's voice in '*n Keur uit die Pelgrimsverhale van Geoffrey Chaucer* (1989) gains a certain edge inherent in any sceptical observer of Afrikaans culture during the apartheid period.²⁹ Terms, locutions, and values associated with the very conservative culture of the Reformed Dutch Church (with which 90 per cent of Afrikaners are affiliated and which re-enforced the South African government's apartheid policies during the years Boje translated most of the *Tales*) provide a useful linguistic cluster around which Boje develops the less favourable characters, either among the pilgrims or within their tales, thereby using the Afrikaans language and culture to critique those values. A similar dissenting voice speaks when Iranian Alireza Mahdipour translates the *Tales* into Farsi.³⁰ By appropriating the stance of the Chaucerian pilgrim who abrogates responsibility for the tales' message – منقبت زبان این قاصر و است کند من طبع – Mahdipour acerbically appraises the conservative Iranian government's mismanagement and misunderstanding of the values it claims to control and interpret. These translations engage us in contrapuntal forms of reading: they introduce us into new conceptual categories using terms we have been trained to interpret in other ways.³¹ Thus when Mahdipour translates a medieval literary trope, he also requires us to understand its new Iranian context and the danger inherent in his translation enterprise. Chaucer's *Tales*, translated and reimagined for vastly different audiences and purposes, weakens the sense that the West exclusively controls the interpretation and use of its canonical texts; at the same time, the globalised *Tales* invites the West to recognise the constructive affinities between the two cultures and abandon 'the idea that Europe [is] the standard against which all other cultures [are] to be measured'.³²

In such ways, these translations enlarge our sense of who has something valuable to say about the European Middle Ages in general and Chaucer in particular. Rather than limiting our sources of knowledge to those whose

claim to the medieval heritage had been defined by the first two types of global medievalism, this type expands our sources. Where historical teleologies would limit expertise to those residing in the West, linguistic global medievalism suggests that those outside the West's inner circle can provide insights into Europe's medieval past. And we need not limit those non-Western voices to scholars. Just as popular medievalism in the West has told us about the scholarly reception of the medieval past, so can popular medievalism elsewhere. The translations especially can shed new light on the originating texts, for they are the ultimate reception study. Rewriting the medieval text for a living time, place, and language, these translations provide the most intimate means for seeing what an older text might say and do in an expanded here and now.

This mode of global medievalism brings us full circle to the transcultural Middle Ages that have prompted much critical attention by exposing the misperceptions at the root of nationalist medievalism.³³ The nineteenth and twentieth centuries' much beloved image of a somewhat isolated proto-nation populated by a single people speaking one common vernacular has been replaced by a more cosmopolitan medieval Europe, where people were more mobile, more polyglot, and less ethnically pure than has been imagined. Linguistic global medievalism can help locate 'both non-foundational and non-imperial ways for "doing medieval studies" in a post-national, neo-colonial world'.³⁴ With this in mind, Chaucer might not be at all surprised that Overo-Tarimo's *Wahala Dey O!* has transformed *The Miller's Tale* into a truly global enterprise: Overo-Tarimo was born in Nigeria, began writing this project in 2006 as part of a 'Chaucer and Translation' course with Sif Rikhardsdottir in Iceland, gave the play its world premiere in the United Kingdom, and is currently filming it in Nigeria. These insights suggest that this third type of global medievalism is the rightful heir of a global Middle Ages – global not because all the world shares the same historiographic periods as the European West, but because the European West was shaped by the rest of the world in ways yet to be fully examined.

NOTES

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8. Ato Quayson, 'Translations and Transnationals: Pre- and Postcolonial', in *Postcolonial Approaches to the European Middle Ages: Translating Cultures*, ed. Ananya Jahanara Kabir and Deanne Williams (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 254; Quayson borrows Edward Said's term, 'contrapuntal', to invoke 'intertwined and overlapping histories' (*Culture and Imperialism* [New York, 1993], p. 18).
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10. Nadia Altschul, 'Transfer', in *Medievalism: Key Critical Terms*, ed. Richard Utz and Elizabeth Emery (Rochester, NY: D. S. Brewer, 2014), p. 239.
11. See Geraldine Heng and Lynn Ramey, 'Early Globalities, Global Literatures: Introducing a Special Issue on the Global Middle Ages', *Literature Compass* 11/7 (2014), 391–393 and fn 4 and 5 for the multiple temporalities enfolded in the term 'Global Middle Ages' and their efforts to wrestle with the term's unavoidable presumption of the European premodern as an universal 'instantiating matrix'.
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13. Nadia Altschul, 'On the Shores of Nationalism: Latin American Philology, Local Histories and Global Designs', *La Corónica*, 35 (2007), 10–11.
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18. See Laura Kendrick's analysis of American Anglo-Saxonism and sense that Americans were able to turn the clock back to a pre-conquest period, 'The American Middle Ages: Eighteenth-Century Saxonist Myth-Making', in *The Middle Ages After the Middle Ages in the English-Speaking World*, ed. Marie-Françoise Alamichel and Derek Brewer (Woodbridge, England: D.S. Brewer, 1997), pp. 121–136.
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21. Sponsler, *Ritual Imports*, pp. 68–122.
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29. John Boje, trans., 'n Keur Uit Die Pelgrimsverhale van Geoffrey Chaucer' (Pretoria, 1989).
30. Alireza Mahdipour, trans., *کنتربری حکایتهای* (unpublished manuscript).
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Medievalism and theories of temporality

In his *Confessions*, St Augustine famously ponders the paradox of time. Time is utterly familiar, yet resists definition: ‘What then is time? Provided that no one asks me, I know. If I want to explain it to an inquirer, I do not know.’¹ Time seems a very simple category of experience until we try to define it. We may make a similar observation about ‘temporality’. While this word is currently in vogue, its range of senses is wide and fluid. It can refer philosophically to the qualities and properties of time, or to different historical periods and their phenomenological experience and cultural representation of time. ‘Temporality’ is sometimes also used strategically, to defamiliarise the dominant ‘common sense’ understanding of time experienced as a simple linear progression; and is increasingly used in the plural to describe competing or layered understandings of time, history, and cultural tradition as they are experienced in any given moment or epoch. Such multiple temporalities – or in Carolyn Dinshaw’s alternative phrases, ‘temporal multiplicity’ or ‘heterogeneous temporalities’ – are also inflected by complex cultural politics of epistemology, sexuality, and religious belief and practice.²

Both time and temporality are crucial categories for thinking about the medieval past and the uses we make of that past in post-medieval and contemporary culture. How do we make the past meaningful and comprehensible in the present? How do we conceptualise temporal difference? How do we see ourselves ‘moving’ back to the past and forward again into the present? And what kind of expertise do we need to make that journey? These are questions that belong equally to medieval and medievalism studies: the possibility of movement between the two temporal eras is structurally enabling for both. Theories and representations of time and temporality in medieval culture, philosophy, and literature offer intriguing avenues for study, and Augustine’s meditations are only one powerful moment in this rich and suggestive history. Temporality also sits behind the vexed question of historicism in medieval literary studies: what do we do with what we know about medieval texts, buildings, manuscripts, and artefacts and the social,

economic, and cultural contexts in which they were produced? How do we position ourselves as modern subjects vis-à-vis the medieval past?

In this chapter I will use the phrase ‘medievalist temporalities’ to characterise and emphasise the temporal lenses through which we view the Middle Ages. That is, I seek to underline what at one level may seem obvious: that temporality is the principal category by which we apprehend the medieval period, whether that might be in scholarly or more common and popular usages, and equally, whether that might be in the interest of historical reconstruction or imaginative re-visitation. Throughout, the chapter will emphasise the similarities and contiguities between medieval historical scholarship and the study of medievalism. While these fields are often kept separate (drawing, as they do, on different primary texts, different methodologies, and different critical affiliations), the paired issues of temporal continuity and temporal disruption between the medieval and modern eras disclose some potential synergies between the two disciplines.

If medievalist temporalities are a crucial part of the medievalist imaginary, they are often hard to separate from a powerful metaphorical language that characterises such difference in spatial terms. This is most obvious in the metaphor of ‘time travel’, but it is equally suggestive in the critical vocabulary of medieval studies. When we speak of ‘approaching’, ‘re-visiting’, even ‘looking back at’ the Middle Ages, metaphors of space, distance, and travel are deeply embedded in the way we conceive our negotiation of historical difference. While the imaginative possibility of time travel is a familiar trope in medievalist fiction and cinema, the possibility of making an imaginative journey to the past and the associated metaphors such as ‘re-visiting’ the past may also make manifest a latent desire behind scholarly acts of recuperation. As Bettina Bildhauer argues in her chapter in this collection, medievalist cinema often thematises a special relationship to time and history (or indeed, a legendary pre-history). The idea that the past is somehow *somewhere* else, ‘a foreign country’ in L.P. Hartley’s compelling phrase,³ is true of many areas of historical enquiry, but as I will suggest in this chapter, the medieval past is characterised by its alterity: its spatial, cultural, and linguistic otherness to modernity. In modern Western culture, if you are setting out from the present to the past, the Middle Ages are one of the most popular destinations.⁴ For this reason, I will suggest that the history and development of medievalist temporalities deserve special attention as an exemplary route to the past; a route that, whether we acknowledge it or not, sits behind so many of our endeavours, whether we are in pursuit of nuanced scholarly historical understanding or a fantastic projection of contemporary anxieties onto an alien setting.

The first part of this chapter will focus on temporality as it informs and structures medievalist cultural practice, and underpins our changing

understanding of the cultural differences and similarities between the medieval and the post-medieval, or as we may say, the non-medieval. In the second section, I will focus on medievalist texts that explore ways of crossing from one time period to another. My texts are mostly longer narratives of fiction and film: the paradoxes of time travel typically play out at a leisurely pace. I will suggest that much popular medievalism, perhaps surprisingly, is keen to emphasise a deep temporal and cultural disjunction between ‘medieval’ and ‘modern’, a disjunction that is being systematically dismantled by many modern medieval scholars. More rare, in contemporary culture, are those texts that put these two epistemic formations into radical dialogue with each other, with the potential to blur, rather than underline, such distinctions.

Medievalist temporalities

Theoretical questions about temporality and medievalism are not easily distinguished from questions about the medieval conception of time and history. The circularity of this issue becomes starkly evident when we realise that modern historians often characterise the medieval understanding of time and historical change in terms of lack and deficiency, if not downright incompetence. That is, medieval epistemologies are used to underline, even to constitute, a binary distinction between premodern and modern.

In 1969, for example, Peter Burke argued that the modern sense of ‘history’ – dominant since about 1800 – began to develop only in the Renaissance. Burke argued that three fundamental factors of a sense of history were undeveloped in the medieval period. First, medieval people lacked ‘the sense of anachronism, or sense of historical perspective’.⁵ This was exemplified by their incurious attitude to historical ruins; their allegorical approach to the Bible (by which the Old Testament was seen as prefiguring the New); and their sense that the law was primarily customary: ‘New laws were – in theory – impossible; a contradiction in terms, for law was custom and custom was old by definition.’ The second deficiency was uncritical medieval attitudes to evidence; this permitted the blurring of myths, fictions and authority. Third, for Burke, was the lack of interest in historical causation.

At the end of his chapter, however, Burke acknowledges the growing number of exceptions to these dominant views in the twelfth, thirteenth, and fourteenth centuries.⁶ And in the decades after Burke wrote this essay, many studies have demonstrated the different and layered ways time was conceptualised in the medieval period. One of the most influential is the

contrast drawn by Jacques le Goff between ‘church time’ and ‘merchant time’, both operating together in suspended complementarity. More recently, Isabel Davis shows how Christian time is both ‘stretched’ but also ‘contorted’ at the Crucifixion, ‘folded over itself into multiple layers’ that *include* Judaic time, rather than simply displacing it.⁷

Around the same time as Burke was writing, Aron Gurevich offered a more subtle reading of medieval Christian time. According to his influential study, medieval time was certainly eschatological, and linear, organised around the Incarnation of Christ and the anticipation of the Last Judgement, but it also retained its older, cyclic aspects that honoured agricultural seasons, for example.⁸ Gurevich explores a number of other contradictions in the medieval understanding of time. He seems in part to anticipate the multiple cultural temporalities explored by more recent critical theorists such as Dipesh Chakrabarty, who demonstrates the persistence of traditional understandings of time in colonial and postcolonial cultures.⁹ Nevertheless, Gurevich agrees with Burke on the anachronism of medieval historical consciousness that he characterises, indeed, as ‘anti-historical’.¹⁰

Recent scholarship has foregrounded a more mobile and fluid understanding of temporal, cultural, and intellectual heterogeneity both within the Middle Ages and in modernity’s construction of that concept. Medieval cultural, political, and religious forms have been shown to persist well into the Early Modern period, although very unevenly;¹¹ and there has been much dispute over whether modernity in general is marked by a dramatic ‘secularisation’ of Western culture. Our understanding of the relations between medievalism, orientalism, and cosmopolitanism, and also the different intellectual traditions of France and Germany, in particular, has changed substantially in recent years.¹²

Much recent work challenges the modern ‘logical’ view of temporal and historical progression and periodisation by embracing medieval anachronism and asynchrony. Paul Strohm draws on the work of Ernst Bloch to explore the ‘temporal asynchrony’ of medieval writing, and the manner in which Chaucer’s texts and their inability to control time open up rich ‘alternative possibilities and potentially utopian perspectives’. Chaucer’s Canterbury pilgrims, for example, ‘are revealed as subject to the asymmetrical pressures of ecclesiastical time and mercantile time, liturgical time and historical time, traditionality and innovation, youth and age, priority and subsequence, the socially residual and the socially emergent’.¹³ Troilus’s translation of Petrarch’s ‘*S’amor non è*’ in the first book of *Troilus and Criseyde* functions as a ‘wrinkle’ in time or a ‘temporal archive’: ‘a nonsynchronous intimation of past and future at the heart of the present’.¹⁴ Strohm marshals these insights into a general statement about textuality per se: ‘The whole point

about texts and time is the inability of writing to prevent the temporal discord imported by the disparate prehistories, and unruly utopianisms, of the verbal materials from which the text is made. Texts are always getting ready to fly apart in time, to decompose into their own heterogeneous materials.¹⁵

Strohm's book, *Theory and the Premodern Text*, wears its 'theory' lightly. His readings of medieval temporality put 'the text' at the centre, and 'theory' is conceived as 'an interrogative standpoint, implicated in the framing of questions from somewhere outside the text's own network of assumptions'.¹⁶ Other scholars work from more general theories of time, in the writings of Lucien Febvre, Bruno Latour, and Johannes Fabian, among others. Jeffrey Jerome Cohen draws on the work of a number of temporal theorists (Clifford Geertz, Julia Kristeva, Stephen Hawking, Bruno Latour, and Rita Felski) to sketch out some new 'theoretical alliances' between medieval studies, critical temporal studies, postcolonial thought and 'corporeal theory'.¹⁷ An important theme of Cohen's chapter on time in *Medieval Identity Machines* is the 'freeing up' of the Middle Ages, breaking open the bounded, enclosed nature of the medieval past, and the cultural alterity that preserves it as an area of specialist expertise.¹⁸

Cohen's book is an influential example of critical thinking about temporality that has informed a number of contemporary projects: in particular, some of the work done by the Babel working group and its journal, *post-medieval: a journal of medieval cultural studies*, first published in 2010. This journal, edited by Eileen Joy and Myra Seaman, juxtaposes essays on medieval, medievalist, neomedievalist and non-medieval texts in a deliberate attempt to disrupt the distinctions that have dominated the intellectual and institutional study of the medieval past and the production and reception of medievalist texts. And in the area of film studies, Bettina Bildhauer has argued persuasively that 'medieval film has played a significant but, so far, totally overlooked role in this modernist, and later postmodern, critique of time'.¹⁹

Perhaps the most eloquent interventions into the understanding of medieval temporalities have come from Carolyn Dinshaw, who in a series of studies has explored some of the possible connections between medieval writing and contemporary medieval scholars and readers.²⁰ One of the most crucial ideas that runs through *Getting Medieval*, for example, is the idea of 'touching the past', theorising a form of queer history that enables a different kind of affective relationship to the past. And in *How Soon is Now?* Dinshaw develops the idea of temporal heterogeneity in the Middle Ages, studying various medieval texts in which time seems either to accelerate or decelerate, such as the story of *The Monk and the Bird*, *The Seven Sleepers of Rome*, and later stories of the Rip Van Winkle type. She explores the

implications of these multiple medieval temporalities for queer history, of feeling out of time, ‘like an anachronism’, especially when she discusses her own identification with Hope Emily Allen, editor of the fifteenth-century *Book of Margery Kempe*, and Allen’s identification with Kempe. Dinshaw’s work on the Middle Ages articulates a new form of asynchrony that has implications for both medieval studies and medievalism studies. In a later essay, ‘All Kinds of Time’, she remarks that ‘Our business . . . is to think analytically and creatively about the past and our relations to it, and by extension then to think analytically and creatively about time.’²¹

Dinshaw’s compelling analyses of ‘the heterogeneity of the present’ or the multiple temporalities that are shared by both medieval and non-medieval writing disclose a desire for ‘another *kind* of time’, a desire that might be shared by modern scholars and the medieval cultures they study, as both professional students of the past, and amateur (and potentially, as queer) readers and lovers of the Middle Ages. Dinshaw’s epilogue, a reading of Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger’s 1944 film, *A Canterbury Tale*, draws together many of the book’s themes – asynchrony, amateur medievalism, desire for the past, queer temporality – to show how the medieval still persists in the present, even if transfigured by different forms of religion, tradition, nation, or nature. The film’s ‘queer’ amateur historian, Thomas Colpeper, is incorporated into Dinshaw’s redemptive ‘disorderly and asynchronous collective’, urging us to embrace the ‘failures, amateurisms, non-modern temporalities and the attachments they foster’.²²

Dinshaw’s closing invitation to think of historicism, temporality and professional medieval studies differently is almost rhapsodic. It chimes with Aranye Fradenburg’s call for a more passionate, desiring medieval studies, and with the diverse practices of the Babel group.²³ Dinshaw also argues there is a strong sense in which we have not left the Middle Ages behind and this enables the kinds of asynchronous relationships with the medieval past that are the subject of her book. Nevertheless, it is possible to argue the converse: that the Middle Ages become visible and apparent to us only and precisely because we perceive ourselves as having left them behind, as having moved on. Western historicist tradition shows us repeatedly how this is done, attributing the modern subject with the conceptual and imaginative power to move backwards and forwards at will. It is worth tracing some exemplary moments in this influential tradition.

According to the familiar mythologies of the Renaissance, the so-called Dark Ages were the period of ignorance and superstition that characterised the years after the fall of the Roman Empire. This period of cultural and social decline allowed Renaissance humanists to position themselves as archaeological necromancers, conjuring up the past through the familiar

and still popular trope of ‘speaking’ with the past, in dialogue with its famous dead. Petrarch wrote letters to his ‘friends’ Homer and Cicero, for example, and in a letter to Francesco Vittori in 1513, Machiavelli described how in the evening, during his exile from Florence, he would retreat to his study and ‘step inside the venerable courts of the ancients’: ‘And for four hours at a time I feel no boredom, I forget all my troubles, I do not dread poverty, and I am not terrified by death. I absorb myself into them completely.’²⁴ Not only does Machiavelli ‘visit’ the past by transcending time; he is aware of the mysterious temporality of intellectual abstraction and immersion in the past. Christine de Pizan, in *The Book of the City of Ladies*, similarly brought women from a range of times and places into the one allegorical city in a series of bold juxtapositions: for example, Medea, the Virgin, and Isabeau of Bavaria, the Queen of France. Depending on one’s temporal and ideological perspective, Christine’s project could be labelled anachronistically naïve, an example of medievalism in the Middle Ages, or as a Petrarchan exercise in humanist scholarly recovery.

Most famously among modern scholars, Stephen Greenblatt revelled in his own desire similarly to transcend historical time and come into the presence of the writers whose work he loved, in order to speak with the dead.²⁵ In this humanist tradition, the possibility of moving across time to create intellectual communities depends on the accumulation of scholarly expertise and historical understanding so great that the learned humanist subject is able to move forwards and backwards in time, or indeed, to bring the past into the present. It depends, that is, on a subject position of cultural authority, one that enjoys a substantial lineage in post-medieval thought.

In 1598, Thomas Speght published *The Workes of our Antient and Learned English Poet, Geoffrey Chaucer*.²⁶ Speght’s title both glorifies the works of Chaucer as an author worthy of scholarly recovery, and simultaneously pushes Chaucer’s poetry back deep into an obscure past from which the editor’s own labours will rescue him. The term ‘ancient’ was often used in English humanist practice to characterise what we would call the Middle Ages, and render that phenomenon ripe for scholarly recuperation.²⁷ Speght’s temporal distancing of the medieval poet is both derivative of humanist classical scholarship and deeply influential on English tradition, as he licenses the activities of the modern scholar: the medieval text is brought forward into dialogue with the present in a way that is very enabling as a scholarly model, because the capacity to speak with the dead depends on the scholar’s expertise and patience, ‘rescuing’ the passive, disabled medieval text, and furnishing it with an elaborate editorial and interpretative apparatus and most significantly, a glossary. Among his introductory materials, Speght includes a poetic dialogue between past and present, ‘The Reader to Geoffrey Chaucer’, in which the

reader addresses the poet and asks where he has been ‘al this while’. Chaucer replies,

In haulks, and hernes, God wot, and in exile,
Where non vouchsaft to yeeld me words or lookes:
Till one which saw me there, and knew my friends,
Did bring me forth: such grace sometimes God sends.²⁸

The phrase ‘halks and hirnes’ is glossed ‘nooks and corners’ by the *Middle English Dictionary* [halk, n. 1]. In conjunction with the phrase describing Chaucer as ‘in exile’, it reminds us that temporal loss is often closely aligned with geographical dislocation: travelling to the past is like making a quest or a pilgrimage to another country, one that is less securely mapped than one’s homeland, and where, in this case, linguistic difference is crucial. Chaucer is ‘brought forth’ a little like the righteous pagan souls brought forth by Jesus after he harrowed hell, in another narrative of pleated, folded temporality. Such temporal and cultural transitions have been enacted over and over again through the long history of medievalism. Through scholarship, enthusiasm, magic, or misfortune, the privileged subject either journeys as a character to the medieval past, or recreates it, as an author or director, in precise historical verisimilitude. Entering the ‘world’ of the medieval book becomes an enabling trope for many imaginative medievalist texts: Speght’s edition shows how this is done by moving with ease between ‘black letter’ Gothic fonts for Chaucer’s works, and modern roman and italic fonts for his own commentaries.

Philip Sidney also writes of Chaucer’s ‘revered antiquity’, though confessing his own confusion about the relative priorities and the ordering of past and present.

Chaucer, undoubtedly, did excellently in his *Troilus and Criseyde*; of whom, truly, I know not whether to marvel more, either that he in that misty time could see so clearly, or that we in this clear age go so stumblingly after him. Yet had he great wants, fit to be forgiven in so reverent an antiquity.²⁹

Sidney’s ‘misty time’ uncannily prefigures a very common trope in cinematic medievalism: mist and fog often serve as symbolic temporal markers of the obscure and pre-enlightenment medieval past, in contrast to the ‘clear age’ of the brilliant and golden sixteenth century, for example. Sidney argues for Chaucer’s exceptionality while the phrase ‘after him’ neatly encapsulates an unresolved tension between ontological and cultural priority: coming later might not necessarily confer superiority. However, the final sentence removes doubt: Chaucer belongs to such ‘revered antiquity’ that he cannot be held to modern standards at all. Ultimately, temporal and cultural alterity are neatly aligned.

An alternative, but equally influential, kind of medievalist temporality is found in medieval writing itself, which often models this form of looking backward, as we saw with Christine de Pizan earlier. In the first chapter in this volume, Chris Jones discusses the way *Beowulf* medievalises its own origins. A more familiar example is Malory's nostalgia for an older, superior world of medieval romance in *Le Morte Darthur*. This is a version of the *translatio studii* trope familiar from the romances of Chrétien de Troyes: learning and chivalry alike begin in the classical past, and gradually move across time and cultures to medieval France.³⁰ But they often diminish in strength. Malory laments that his contemporary Englishmen do not love with the same passion and fidelity as the knights of Arthur's time; but the most germane passage for our purposes is his equivocation over just exactly what Lancelot and Guinevere were doing behind closed doors when Lancelot is apprehended by Agravain and Mordred: 'And whether they were abed or at other manner of disports, me list not thereof make no mention, for love that time was not as love is nowadays.'³¹ Malory is conscious that the forms and nature of love are variable; and the question of whether medieval courtly love marked a difference in the nature of feeling has been a preoccupation of modern scholarship. In this instance, however, Malory's concern is ideological, rather than epistemological, as the ambiguity allows him to protect the reputation of the Queen.

Medievalist temporalities are often ideologically laden. We might consider, for example, the various forms of Arthurian revivalism that characterised much of the Plantagenet dynasty, especially Edward III's foundation of the Order of the Garter in 1348 and his construction of the Round Table lists at Windsor Castle. As a powerfully symbolic material artefact, Edward's massive Round Table, now suspended in the Great Hall of Winchester Castle, can stand as an emblem of the shared capacity of both medieval and medievalist adaptive practices for rewriting or repainting the past and blurring the lines of historical realism. Where Edward III had himself painted as King Arthur in a medieval act of medievalism, Henry VIII later had his own face painted over Edward's in 1522, and the famous red and white Tudor rose painted at the centre of the Table, in 'Renaissance' acts of medievalism. Both these forms of medievalist cultural practice are enabled by the imaginative possibilities of medievalist temporalities.

Travelling to and from the past

What does all this mean for medievalist practice, especially in the field of popular culture? We turn now to consider a selection of later medievalist fictions that foreground the possibility of movement between medieval and later temporalities. Time-travel narratives can depend on quasi-scientific,

magical, or mystical mediation and the manipulation of time (magic rings; time-machines; spells that work properly or improperly to send people forwards or backwards in time); others are more subtly visionary, allegorical, or self-referential. Some such fictions can constitute quite subtle meditations on medievalist temporality; others are predicated on simple oppositions.

Temporal movement usually goes backwards: individual protagonists reach back through a nostalgic or scholarly desire to re-create or re-live medieval times, or through random accident. The transition between two time zones is often quite violent, and certainly disorienting for the protagonist – but special mention must be made of earlier examples that reach back to the past through fictions of continuity.

Sir Walter Scott's *The Lay of the Last Minstrel*, for example, published in 1805, is set in the years after the execution of the Duke of Monmouth in 1686. An old minstrel appears at the Duchess's court, and sings of her father and grandfather's deeds, and he then offers 'an ancient strain, / He never thought to sing again'.³² The story of Lady Margaret and William Deloraine is set in the 1550s, so Scott has reached back to the past in gradual stages. The sympathetic figure of the old minstrel represents an implicit appeal to the continuity of an oral tradition of poetry, while the circumstances of the poem's commission – Lady Buccleugh had suggested the subject-matter to Scott – also suggests a continuity between the minstrel and the modern poet. Scott's *Lay* shares with some famous forgeries – the Ossian poems of James Macpherson (1765) and the Rowley poems of Thomas Chatterton (1769) – an assumption that the medieval past is not completely out of reach; it could be invented and recreated without the need of an elaborate machinery of time travel, needing just the workings of the creative mind and a poetic affinity that could ventriloquise, as it were, the voice of the medieval poet.³³

As the pace of cultural change became discernibly faster, however, the disjunction between the medieval and the modern required a mediating bridge of some kind; and the time travel convention starts to take shape. In the late nineteenth century, the best way out of the modern industrial city of London was to dream of a simpler, more pastoral medieval time. The action of William Morris's *A Dream of John Ball* (1888) and *News from Nowhere* (1890) is framed by dream visions that imitate the medieval genre. The literary convention of dreaming naturalises the experience of temporal otherness, and is probably the simplest mechanism for time-travel fiction, both to the past, and indeed the future.

By contrast, Mark Twain constructs a very elaborate frame for temporal dislocation. The narrator of *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* meets a stranger at Warwick Castle who seems very knowledgeable about the

medieval past.³⁴ The narrator returns to the inn, ‘steeped in a dream of the olden time’, sits down and reads Malory’s ‘enchanting book’, then dreams again. Then the stranger, Hank Morgan, knocks on his door, and is persuaded to tell his story. A successful manufacturer of arms, machines, and labour-saving devices, he got into a fight with another man who was armed with a crowbar. Blacking out after being struck, he awoke to find himself in a beautiful country landscape where he first encounters a knight in armour. But the stranger soon tires of talking, and hands the narrator a parchment manuscript which contains his account of his time at Camelot. Twain’s novel combines a number of tropes that will become familiar in medievalism: the amateur medieval scholar, the old book, and an oneiric framing of time travel.

Many medievalist fictions seek to correct or improve what they find when they travel back to the past. Romance heroines, in particular, often take back a version of liberal feminism to correct the extremes of medieval patriarchy and misogyny, or the ‘superstitions’ and corruptions of the medieval church.³⁵ In Diane Darcy’s romance novel *She Owns the Knight* and Tamara Gill’s *Defiant Surrender*, both time-travelling heroines are amateur historians.³⁶ Unlike the sophisticated queer amateurs of Dinshaw’s study, these heroines find redemption and temporal resolution in decidedly heterosexual romance.

While most medievalist temporalities are marked by individuals or groups who travel back to the Middle Ages, a smaller category begins in the medieval past and travels forward. Two such films, Vincent Ward’s *The Navigator* (1988) and Jean-Marie Poiré’s *Les Visiteurs* (1993) each depend on dramatic contrasts between the medieval past and the future.³⁷

In *The Navigator*, the copper-mining inhabitants of a plague-threatened village in 1348 Cumbria follow the ‘dream’ of a young boy, Griffon, who seems to see the village being saved from disease if they can forge a copper cross and place it on the church steeple. A mysterious engine appears that helps them dig through the earth, but they emerge in modern Wellington. Throughout, the film moves backwards and forwards between the medieval time, filmed in gritty black and white, and the coloured world of modern time in which the miners try and ‘follow’ the action of Griffon’s proleptic vision.

In *Les Visiteurs*, a twelfth-century magician forgets to include the quail eggs in a spell that is designed to reverse time just a few days so the hero will not kill his fiancée’s father. Instead, the knight and his servant are propelled forward into 1992. The film is brightly and cheerfully lit, and depends on the slapstick comedy of medieval ignorance of modern customs, plumbing, and engineering; but it also plays, *Blackadder*-style, with class expectations. The ‘castle’ is now owned by an effete bourgeois man, while the

decidedly middle-class dentist's wife, who is the direct descendant of the knight, demonstrates a courtly largesse with her credit card to ensure the comfort of the visitors.

The villagers in *The Navigator* do save their village (though not without at least one casualty), while in *Les Visiteurs* the class narrative is played out in a more complex manner. The servant Jacquouille, who has discovered life is much better for peasants after the revolution of 1789, deceives his master and sends the pretentious hotel manager back to the twelfth century to finish his days as a medieval servant. When the lord returns to his own time, he is re-united with his fiancée, played by the same actor who plays his descendant, Béatrice.

In Michael Crichton's novel *Timeline* (1999) time-travel back to fourteenth-century France is facilitated by a machine that draws on the theory of quantum mechanics; it is designed to integrate the expertise of historical research and cutting-edge scientific discovery. In the end, though, romance trumps science, as the true lover (and scholar) of the medieval past remains happily in the medieval period, secured in the consolations of heterosexual romance.³⁸ By contrast, Connie Willis' *Doomsday Book* (1992), which also puts scientists in charge of time travel, emphasises the inadequacy of scholarly learning as any kind of practical guide to the 'real' Middle Ages.³⁹ For all the imaginative and inventive possibilities of movement *between* medieval and modern eras, and in contrast to the sophisticated theorising that allows medieval scholars like Dinshaw to project a form of medieval and medievalist asynchrony, the Middle Ages in time-travel fiction at least often remain intractable, resistant, and ultimately, out of temporal and cultural reach.

This chapter has ranged across popular, scholarly, and theoretical medievalist temporalities, attempting to demonstrate the centrality of time – and our different ways of negotiating its mysteries – to the various ways we conceive the medieval past, whether in the construction of scholarly expertise, or in the imaginative capacity of medievalist fictions. Medievalist temporality is not only a property of medievalism: it is instrumental to the idea of the Middle Ages, and provides a striking exemplar for modernity's sense of its own past.

NOTES

1. Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. Henry Chadwick (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 230.
2. Carolyn Dinshaw, *How Soon is Now? Medieval Texts, Amateur Readers, and the Queerness of Time* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012), pp. 1–7.
3. L. P. Hartley, *The Go-Between* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1971), p. 1.

4. It should be noted, however, that non-European countries have a very different, rather more literal, spatial and geographical relationship to the medieval past.
5. Peter Burke, *The Renaissance Sense of the Past* (London: Edward Arnold, 1969), p. 4.
6. Burke, *Renaissance*, p. 20.
7. Jacques le Goff, *Time, Work and Culture in the Middle Ages*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), pp. 29–42; Isabel Davis, “‘Ye that passen by þe weiye’: Time, Topology and the Medieval Use of Lamentations 1.12”, *Textual Practice* 25.3 (2011), 437–472.
8. Aron J. Gurevich, *Categories of Medieval Culture*, trans. G. L. Campbell (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1985), p. 111.
9. Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).
10. Gurevich, *Categories*, p. 129.
11. See, for example, David Wallace, *Premodern Places: Calais to Surinam, Chaucer to Aphra Behn* (Malden: Blackwell, 2004).
12. Andrew Cole and D. Vance Smith (eds.), *The Legitimacy of the Middle Ages: On the Unwritten History of Theory* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010); Bruce W. Holsinger, *The Premodern Condition: Medievalism and the Making of Theory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005); John M. Ganim, *Medievalism and Orientalism: Three Essays on Literature, Architecture, and Cultural Identity* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005); John M. Ganim and Shayne Aaron Legassie (eds.), *Cosmopolitanism and the Middle Ages* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).
13. Paul Strohm, ‘Fictions of Time and Origin’, in *Theory and the Premodern Text* (Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 2000), p. 66.
14. Paul Strohm, ‘Chaucer’s *Troilus* as Temporal Archive’, in *Theory and the Premodern Text*, p. 91.
15. Strohm, ‘Fictions’, p. 65.
16. Strohm, ‘Introduction’, in *Theory and the Premodern Text*, p. xv.
17. Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, *Medieval Identity Machines* (Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 2003), esp. pp. 1–9.
18. See also Thomas A. Prendergast and Stephanie Trigg, ‘What is Happening to the Middle Ages?’ *New Medieval Literatures* 9 (2007), 218–220.
19. Bettina Bildhauer, *Filming the Middle Ages* (London: Reaktion Books, 2011), p. 25.
20. Carolyn Dinshaw, *Getting Medieval: Pre- and Postmodern* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999); Dinshaw, *How Soon is Now?*
21. Carolyn Dinshaw, ‘All Kinds of Time’, *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* 35.1 (2013), 4–5.
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Queer medievalisms

A case study of Monty Python and the Holy Grail

Medievalism flows with and against the currents of time, as Stephanie Trigg demonstrates in her contribution to this collection, and its potential queerness arises when acts of the present redefine the cultural meaning of genders and sexualities in the past, through a transtemporal and oscillating vision between yesterday and today. It also resides in the power of the past to destabilise modern conceptions of gendered and erotic identities. Queerness, in these instances, does not refer exclusively, or even primarily, to homosexual acts and identities but to disruptions of the prevailing social order that arise when genders and sexualities do not conform to prior expectations – whether those expectations circulate in the past, in the present, or in the medievalist middle. Queer theory, which blossomed from the field of gay and lesbian studies, argues that all sexual identities, whether gay, straight, or otherwise, represent cultural constructions of desire that carry numerous ideological consequences for those deemed normative or perverse within their cultures. Within the realm of medievalism, engaging imaginatively with the past can often entail reimagining the contours of one's gender in the present; as Carolyn Dinshaw eloquently argues, 'Queerness... has a temporal dimension... and temporal experiences can render you queer.'¹ In this light queerness imaginatively captures such displacements of the self in and through the past, often for pleasurable purposes but with other, unforetold repercussions as well. 'Medieval' film – an oxymoronic term that visualises an impossible technological anachronism – opens up numerous queer possibilities, for the heart of any such endeavour must be to re-create a vision of the past to speak to audiences in the present, inevitably eliciting numerous misprisions of desire along the way.²

To investigate the queer possibilities of the Middle Ages reborn in the present, this chapter examines key scenes in a definitive text of medievalism, the 1975 film *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*, which stars its directors Terry Jones and Terry Gilliam and the other members of the Monty Python troupe: Graham Chapman, John Cleese, Eric Idle, and Michael Palin. In

doing so, this chapter models a version of queer inquiry that one can bring to various medievalist texts by exploring the ways in which past and present constructions of gender and sexuality create meaning through their intersection. Certainly, play with gender and sexuality is evident throughout the film, perhaps most notably in the sequences featuring Galahad at the Castle Anthrax (in which he is mobbed by sexually aggressive women) and Lancelot's 'rescue' of the effete Prince Herbert (in which our hero is forced to confront the farcical meaning not only of his knightly masculinity but the repercussions of mistaking a man for a maiden in distress). Similar concerns become evident in the film's anxieties about genre, as the pleasures of musical theatre threaten to undermine male characters' pretences at chivalric manhood. Beyond the surface and structural level of narration, the film's queerness extends into its casting, acting, and production. The Pythons regularly engage in exaggerated gender play in their roles, yet in so doing they explore the possibilities of new genders and sexualities by reacting to present-day gender controversies within their re-creation of a mythical Arthurian past. This chapter concludes by addressing the character of the Historian who comments on the film's unfolding action, positing this figure as an incarnation of the dangers of queer medievalism when the past undermines, or even combats, its construction in the present.

As a whole, I theorise the potential queerness of medievalism through three primary modes. Foremost, much medievalism solicits transtemporal play with gender and sexuality, as the Middle Ages offers a playground in which one can reimagine the meaning of past and present constructions of desire. The queerness of medievalism can also become evident when one spies the behind-the-scenes incursions into the past necessary to create a medievalist work, which viewers may not see on screen but that nonetheless infuse it with deeper gendered import. Finally, the past itself may resist taming by its present-day invocations, which testifies to its protean force – a possibility that *Monty Python and the Holy Grail* gleefully explores.

Queering medieval genders

The Pythons' gender play is so obvious that it might not appear to warrant commentary: they put on dresses and otherwise drag about in many of their comic skits. As Marcia Landy observes, 'Drag is a major Python strategy to reverse viewer expectations about traditional social, and particularly professional, roles', citing scenes from *Monty Python's Flying Circus* such as 'Poofy Judges' (in which male judges disrobe and gossip about attractive men); 'Face the Press' (in which a standard format interview programme includes an interview with the Minister of Home Affairs, 'who is wearing a striking

organza dress in pink tulle, with matching pearls'); and 'The Lumberjack Song' (which includes a burly lumberjack singing 'I like to press wild flowers / I put on women's clothing').³ In *The Pythons Autobiography*, they title the chapter detailing the creation of *Monty Python and the Holy Grail* as 'In Which We All Become Starlets',⁴ a self-deprecating assessment of their transformation into comic celebrities that ironically mocks their gender play. Nonetheless, the baseline observation that the Pythons play with gender and transvestism should not overlook the fact that their gender play is at times more complicated than simple drag, for it entails not simply men putting on dresses and unconvincingly performing femininity for comic effect but also men playing men of various masculinities and other permutations of sexed bodies with gendered roles.

Given the Pythons' proclivity for transvestism in their television corpus, *Monty Python and the Holy Grail* is instead notable for its relative lack of drag, which further complicates a clear-cut understanding of their gender play. All of the film's male roles are played by men, and the vast majority of its female roles are played by women, with Connie Booth as the Witch, Carol Cleveland as Zoot and Dingo, Bee Duffell as the Old Crone to Whom King Arthur Said 'Ni!', Rita Davies as the Historian's Wife, and Sally Kinghorn and Avril Stewart jointly billed as 'Either Winston or Piglet' (92).⁵ This flippant ascription of Kinghorn's and Stewart's parts presents them and their characters as interchangeable, which, while it may carry a hint of misogyny, also plays on the similarity of the characters and the at times arbitrary connections between actors and their characters. Other than Terry Jones's performance as the mother of the revolutionary peasant Dennis, male and female roles are played by actors of the corresponding sex. Indeed, Jones's cross-dressing in this scene barely registers as drag, for his character is so mired in mud – 'There's some lovely filth down here' (6), she proclaims – that it is difficult to determine her gender based solely on her appearance.

The film nonetheless repeatedly questions, subverts, and ultimately queers the meaning of medieval gender and sexuality, pointing to the limits and ridiculousness of their enactments. From the first sighting of Graham Chapman as King Arthur, accompanied by his trusty servant / steed Patsy as they prance up to a castle while clapping coconuts to mimic the sound of horses' hooves, viewers realise that the film indulges in a parodic reimagining of Arthur's traditional role and the masculinity associated with it. The crazed Black Knight, after Arthur has lopped off his limbs, exaggerates medieval masculinity by taunting Arthur, 'Running away, eh? You yellow bastard, come back here and take what's coming to you. I'll bite your legs off!' (15). The Black Knight's performance of medieval masculinity proves the shallow fantasy of chivalric identity, with the Pythons satirising the impossibility of

an archetypal gender role that can only be inhabited by men whose visions of unvanquishable manhood have left them deranged.

In this homosocial world of Arthurian adventure, the cultural value of masculinity is repeatedly contested, proving further its unstable and queer foundations, for same-sex milieux frequently invite latent eroticisms to flourish. When Arthur mistakes the peasant Dennis for a woman, he apologises for his error; Dennis points out, however, that Arthur ‘didn’t bother to find out’ his gender before assuming that he was a woman. He then turns to his deeper complaint: ‘What I object to is that you automatically treat me as an inferior’ (6). While the humour of this scene arises primarily from Dennis’s Marxist critique of medieval political structures, he also dismantles the assumption that certain masculinities correspond to men of various social strata. The scene with Dennis builds immediately upon the Pythons’ famed explanation of how to identify a medieval king – ‘He hasn’t got shit all over him’ (5) – which exposes the external symbols of supposedly internal masculine values. Masculinity and social roles are inextricably connected to excrement within the Pythons’ re-creation of the past, thus contesting the assumption that masculinity communicates in and through itself; rather, in these instances, it is the shit – or lack thereof – that performs masculinity for men. Moreover, excrement proves the ultimate meaninglessness of any fantasy of royal masculinity when Arthur is drenched in it at the film’s conclusion.

As these and other such scenes demonstrate, masculinity is a queer social construct, one that society must agree to believe in for its gendered power to cohere yet one that reveals social fissures in its purportedly transparent meaning. Still, if one agrees to these imaginary constructions of masculinity – that the one who is not besmeared with shit is the king, that a man can wield ‘supreme executive power just because some watery tart threw a sword at’ him (9) – their queer foundations could be overlooked, in the same manner as today some people choose to believe in and adopt modes of gender that others reject as outmoded and inhibitory. Even the ultimate unmaking of Arthur’s masculinity when he is showered with excrement at the film’s conclusion could be overlooked, for shit loses its meaning as a marker of medieval identities in the Python world due to the simple fact that it can be washed off. The ultimate fantasy and power of normative masculinity is its inherent plasticity, the fact that it can be manufactured anew in light of shifting cultural circumstances, and so the simple act of highlighting the performative and contradictory nature of gender need not dismantle it entirely.

On a deeper level, the threat to Arthurian masculinity and normative sexuality in *Monty Python and the Holy Grail* emerges from the potential for genre transgressions, in that the apparently masculine genre of a questing narrative will prove as unstable as gender. In this regard multiple characters

express their anxieties that they are on the verge of slipping from a 'medieval' film into a Broadway musical. While film is primarily appreciated and analysed as a visual medium, its score, soundtrack, and incidental music contribute to its narrative development and themes. In *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*, music frequently subverts the film's presentation of Arthurian masculinity, such as when Sir Robin's minstrels sing of his sexual humiliation and torture at the hand of his foes: 'And his nostrils raped, and his bottom burned off, / And his penis split' (31). When Arthur decides to ride to Camelot, the film cuts to the 'interior of a medieval hall', where a 'large group of armoured KNIGHTS are engaged in a well-choreographed song-and-dance routine of the very up-beat "If they could see me now" type of fast bouncy number' (21). A winking parody of Alan Jay Lerner and Frederick Loewe's musical *Camelot*, the scene features lyrics in which the knights flaunt the codes of Arthurian masculinity, proclaiming themselves to be 'opera mad in Camelot', where they 'sequin vests / And impersonate Clark Gable'. The song's final line – 'I have to push the pram a lot' – merges Arthurian military masculinity with motherhood, hybridising the knightly with the maternal and leaving the male body a signifier devoid of signification. Arthur, however, rejects this vision of Camelot – 'No, on second thought let's not go to Camelot. . . It is a silly place' (21–22) – apparently because his vision of kingship clashes with its Broadway antics and its indulgence in gender play through a homosociality rendered excessive by song.

The threat of the film turning into a musical returns to the forefront in the sequence featuring Lancelot's attempted rescue of the wispy Prince Herbert, who repeatedly professes his desire for music ('I'd rather. . . just. . . sing'), which his father repeatedly quells ('You're not going into a song while I'm here!' [47]). This sequence, in effect, extends the confrontation of masculinities encapsulated in Arthur's rejection of Camelot as a 'silly place', staging characters' contrapuntal reactions to music's ability to define their masculinities. Lancelot's misbegotten rescue of Prince Herbert, as he hacks his way through the wedding party to save the imprisoned bridegroom whom he believes to be a damsel in distress, transforms his performance of heroism into ridiculousness, as scholars have noted. Donald Hoffman states, 'The butchery at the banquet, in a way, restores his reputation for heroism, for maschismo, but at the same time destroys it. By being so much the macho hero, Lancelot drains the concept of both sense and sensibility.'⁶ Wlad Godzich agrees, 'Sir Lancelot is finally depicted as a prisoner of his own genre.'⁷ The masculinity of Arthurian romance blinds Lancelot to his brutality, as it also blinds him to the meaning of gender, for he undertakes this mission without ascertaining that the maiden he seeks to rescue is truly a maiden.

The Pythons amplify this scene's play with gender yet further, making chivalric masculinity even more ridiculous when Lancelot inadvertently forges a homosocial bond with Prince Herbert's father. This man, who refused his son the pleasures of song, now desires to ally himself with Camelot – despite the fact that, as audiences have learnt, it is a silly, singing place. In sum, both of these hypermasculine figures are drawn deeper into homosocial bonding throughout the skit, and precisely the type of effete homosociality they so blusteringly reject. In contrast, the reluctant relationship between Prince Herbert and Princess Lucky is depicted as normative, at least in terms of the sexes of the actors' bodies. As Kevin Harty rightly points out, 'the most glaring example of gender bending occurs ironically with Princess Lucky, who is played by a real woman. . . . When we encounter the wonderfully misnamed Princess Lucky, we expect to find a man playing a woman and instead encounter a woman playing a woman'.⁸ However effete Prince Herbert may be, and as much as Princess Lucky may lack the standard attributes of female beauty celebrated in the medieval literary tradition, the scene concludes with them being more representative of heteronormativity – as tenuous as such a term may be for the Pythons – than the brutish figures of Lancelot and Prince Herbert's father. Broadway musicality triumphs as the scene concludes, with Herbert unexpectedly returning alive after his fall from the castle's tower and the wedding guests gathering around him to sing: 'He's going to tell about his great escape. / Oh he fell a long long way / But he's here with us today' (62). Whereas most of the scenes of *Monty Python and the Holy Grail* fail to achieve any real sense of closure – Galahad is rushed out of the Castle Anthrax, Sir Robin flees from the Three-Headed Knight, and in the film's conclusion Arthur and Bedevere are arrested without finding the grail – Prince Herbert's story ends with the reinstatement of music and dance at Swamp Castle, flouting his father's desire to quash song. The storyline ends, however, without resolution for Lancelot, who is left swinging impotently from the ceiling, thereby ironically demonstrating the superiority of musical masculinity to achieve one's desires.

In a scene included in the screenplay but not in the film, viewers would have witnessed yet again music's maddening effect on royal masculinities. The murderous King Brian, who lives in 'a court without women', kills close harmony groups as his preferred pastime. His First Adviser regretfully informs him, 'There are no more close harmony groups in the kingdom, sir', and his Second Adviser therefore offers 'a lute player, whose music is passing sweet' to assuage his murderous wrath. King Brian replies, 'It's not the same, you thick-headed fool! . . . There's no fun in killing *soloists*!'⁹ The scene ends with Robin's minstrels killed as Arthur and his knights escape.

Like Arthur and Prince Herbert's father, King Brian defines his royal persona by rejecting music as an affront to his masculinity, yet in this lost scene as well, music merely highlights the anxieties behind a masculinity predicated upon the senseless rejection of song – thus foregrounding the queer chinks in the Pythons' presentation of medieval masculinity necessary for their satiric take on the past.

Queering modern pythons

As the previous section explores how medievalist texts such as *Monty Python and the Holy Grail* open ample opportunities for queer visions of the past, the act of creating medievalist texts likewise invites opportunities to reformulate past and present visions of gender and sexuality from a queer perspective. In this realm of meta-construction and meta-analysis, the decisions made in constructing a medievalist text can imbue it with a queer sensibility by questioning the meaning of modern genders and sexualities. The quest for queer medievalisms, in these instances, necessitates excursions into the archives for additional primary and secondary sources that contextualise the conditions of the text's creation. In this manner the past serves as a backdrop for analysing cultural codes of the text's present, while also acknowledging the changing nature of 'the present' that stretches from the creation of the medievalist text – in this case, 1975 – to the present of its consumption, which extends to the eternal moment of now.

Certainly, Graham Chapman's homosexuality created a minor tempest for the Pythons. In *A Liar's Autobiography* (first published 1980) Chapman discusses his homosexuality candidly, recalling such moments as his father's surprised discovery of a paperback 'in which two centurions are caressing each other in bed', his medical school days during which his 'sexual life... consisted of going to bed with women while dreaming about men', and his acceptance of his homosexuality after international travel: 'A trip to New Zealand and America made me a little more broad-minded about myself, and... [I] became a raging poof. But no mincing – a butch one with a pipe.'¹⁰ He also describes fellow Pythons Idle and Cleese as discombobulated by his revelation but soon accepting. His candour 'quite stunned' Idle, such that Chapman 'had to explain to him what it all meant – that I did actually go to bed with people of the same sex and that it was quite fun and we actually loved each other'. He paints Cleese's reaction to homosexuality as 'totally, totally alien to him – such a thing was unthinkable'.¹¹ In his diaries Michael Palin recalls his response to Chapman's disclosure of his homosexuality. Dubbing Chapman the 'high priest of hedonism', Palin credits Terry Gilliam for deducing that

Graham, having once made the big decision – and it must have been greater than the decisions most people are called on to make – to profess himself a homosexual, is no longer concerned with making important decisions. He is now concerned with his homosexual relationships and in perpetuating the atmosphere of well-being which good food and drink bring, and in which the relationships thrive.¹²

Gilliam readily accepted his friend's homosexuality, yet his stilted language – 'to profess himself a homosexual' – hints at the barriers gay men faced in speaking openly of their sexuality during this era. It is, of course, not surprising that, during the late 1960s and early 1970s, one's admission of homosexuality elicited some surprise and discomfort, even within the rather bohemian world of television comedy.

Chapman's sexuality adds a complicating factor to the Pythons' play with gender and sexuality in much of their work, for it invites viewers to contemplate the meaning of queer humour when it is not created exclusively by gay men (or conversely, when it is not created exclusively by straight men with a predefined vision of gay people). In discussing why the troupe selected Chapman to play King Arthur in *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*, Palin avows, 'I'm not sure that anybody else particularly wanted to do Arthur because it was a very straight part, not a lot of laughs. I think Graham volunteered. He had that dignity and this wonderful saintly long-suffering look.'¹³ John Cleese similarly professes, 'I think it was obvious that Michael, Eric, and I would probably get most of the laughs and King Arthur was a slightly straighter character around whom the insanities occur. It was just so obvious that it would be Graham, that I'm not so sure there was ever much doubt about it.'¹⁴ Both Palin and Cleese focus on the 'straightness' of the role as a key factor why Chapman fit the part better than the others. Of course, 'straight' here does not refer to sexuality but to comedy: Arthur is indeed the straight man, in comic terms, who finds himself in farcical circumstances that continually frustrate and flummox him. The deflationary humour of the film in large measure arises from the disjunction between his expectations and the events that transpire – for example, he expects to be greeted warmly at the castles he visits, rather than having excrement and wooden rabbits tossed down upon him. King Arthur thus appears as a comic 'straight' man and as ostensibly heterosexual, yet the Pythons also include the meta-cinematic joke that the foundational figure of British legend is a 'poof' in their casting.

In this regard, the Pythons recognise the power of actors, their styles, and their screen personas to imbue a film with levels of meaning beyond its screen-play's depiction of the characters. As Lucy Fischer and Marcia Landy explain, 'Preferred star lives should evince some irony in the comparison or contrast between the individual's on-and-off-screen existences. . . : either the two should

be strangely convergent or radically opposed.’¹⁵ Within the carnivalesque world of Python humour, Chapman’s casting as King Arthur is both ‘strangely convergent’ and ‘radically opposed’. As Palin’s remarks indicate, Chapman’s ‘wonderful saintly long-suffering look’ does indeed make him physically appropriate for the role of a comic straight man, and his personal homosexuality appears ‘radically opposed’ to King Arthur’s heterosexuality as told in the medieval accounts of his troubled relationship with Guinevere. Here as well the Pythons obscure a clear perception of Arthurian sexuality, for the primary marker of King Arthur’s heterosexuality for most viewers – his marriage to Guinevere – is absent from the film. Although the comic possibilities of a gay and / or cuckolded Arthur loom large, the Pythons’ decision to forgo such plotlines evince their preference for homosocial over heterosocial, or explicitly homosexual, humour for the vast majority of the film (with the scene of Galahad at the Castle Anthrax as the primary exception to this tendency).

In contrast, if one were to assume a congruency between actors and their roles and then guess which Python were gay based on his performances in *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*, wouldn’t Eric Idle be the most likely candidate? He plays the lion’s share of the film’s effeminate roles, including Sir Robin, who flees the Three-Headed Giant as his minstrels sing of his cowardice, and Concorde, Sir Launcelot’s servant / steed who is penetrated by an arrow yet maintains his deferential subservience in the prosecution of his duties. The masculinities of Roger the Shrubber and Brother Maynard likewise register as attenuated and weak. Roger the Shrubber’s occupation involves the arrangement, design, and sale of shrubberies, and he bemoans the times in which ‘passing ruffians can say “Ni” at will to old ladies’ (64), although he does not offer any succour to the woman in distress before him. Given his religious vocation, Brother Maynard should live an asexual lifestyle, and Michael Palin drolly recorded of the scene in his diary: ‘Eric and I dressed as monks (gear that really rather suits us).’¹⁶ With their various inflections of queer masculinity, Idle’s roles attest to his ability to perform queerly without drag, thereby demonstrating the instability of masculinity and sexuality as cultural categories within the film’s dramatic action and in its meta-cinematic casting and creation (Figure 15).

As with most good casting decisions, the actors wholly inhabit their roles, and it is difficult to image Chapman playing Idle’s parts or Idle playing King Arthur. On a meta-cinematic level, these casting decisions, like the Pythons’ play with gender and drag, undermine prevailing ideas of sexuality and masculinity in the film’s present in the 1970s, for they prove the ultimate indeterminacy of sexuality for actors during a time when the vast majority of gay actors remained in the closet. Ironically and meta-theatrically rejecting the film’s queer storyline of debasing musical theatre, Idle brought *Monty*



Figure 15 Eric Idle plays queer as Sir Robin, and thus dismantles assumed gendered correlations between stars and their roles.

Python and the Holy Grail to Broadway as the musical *Spamalot* in 2005, proving through his own talents the possibility of a straight man succeeding on the Great White Gay Way of New York theatre. More stereotypes collapse in his musical's storyline, as Lancelot marries Herbert, and Sir Robin – one of Idle's characters in the film – pursues his true calling in musical theatre. A post-facto theatrical allegory of Idle's career, as his former film character is now freed to pursue his Broadway ambitions, Sir Robin queerly triumphs beyond the borders of the film in which he was born, no matter the contours of the character's or his creator's sexuality.

Killing a little boy

As *Monty Python and the Holy Grail* demonstrates through its storyline and its creation, time's fluctuations – between the past we think we know and the

past a medievalist text brings to its audience – bear queering repercussions for assessing ‘medieval’ gender and sexuality depicted in the present, but journeying into the past can unleash unexpected consequences upon the present as well. And so as much as the film is set in the Middle Ages and dramatises a modern-day reconstruction of the past, it also thematises the potential transtemporality of time through the storyline of the Historian – formally known as ‘The Historian Who Isn’t A. J. P. Taylor at All’ – who attempts to narrate the film. As a production assistant slaps a clapboard and calls, ‘*Pictures for Schools*, take eight’, the Historian narrates, ‘Arthur became convinced that a new strategy was required if the Quest for the Holy Grail were to be brought to a successful conclusion. Arthur, having consulted his closest knights, decided that they should separate and search for the Grail individually. Now, this is what they did...’ (29).¹⁷ At this moment, the present collides with the past, as an errant knight gallops by on horseback and slices the Historian’s throat. The Historian’s Wife cries out and rushes to him but cannot save him from this brutal attack by the past (Figure 16).

The incident’s gleefully dark humour should not eclipse its thematic interest in how the past enlivens yet kills. Foremost, the Historian’s narration is buoyant and expressed with childlike enthusiasm. Despite his advanced years, he energetically expounds on Arthurian history, and it is apparent that his passion for the medieval past imbues his life with meaning, as it also allows him imaginary access to his youth. Further, when one ponders the somewhat implausible scenario that the Historian’s wife would accompany him while shooting a segment for the *Pictures for Schools*



Figure 16 For *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*, the queer past is never fully past, and continually forces one to confront its brutal – and darkly comic – repercussions.

series, it becomes apparent that she too is invested in the medieval past, at least as it is incarnated in this medievalist she loves. And so as much as the medieval past has constructed the Historian's vocation and aspects of his personal life, its queering edge – its ability to dissolve longstanding assumptions of personal identity and gendered relationships – is this time felt with a sword's edge.

This violence that the past does to the present comes full circle at the film's conclusion. Shots interspersed throughout *Monty Python and the Holy Grail* depict the police tracking down the Historian's killer, and the police arrest King Arthur and Bedevere for the murder, despite the fact that they are innocent of the crime. (Certainly, they have never been viewed riding horses, which would appear to exonerate them of the charge.) The Historian's Wife identifies Arthur and Bedevere as the killers – 'They're the ones, I'm sure' (88) – and her words signal the film's speedy resolution. As Brian Levy and Lesley Coote observe, 'The dowdy wife of the eminent historian is stereotypical, but is also potentially and actually subversive in that she leads the policemen to the filmmakers, and thus engineers the final "silencing" when the film itself is cut.'¹⁸ As the medieval past marauds in the present and randomly slays its devotees, so too does the present police the past, treating its individuals as an agglomerate of criminal activity. Here, too, we see the queering force of medievalism – stripping Arthur of the remnants of his masculine image as king – but also a literary homage, for, as Arthur cannot fulfil his quest to find the Holy Grail and defeat the snivelling French in the film, he likewise failed to rule peacefully over his kingdom in the literature of the Arthurian tradition. Again, the jokes that the Pythons tell of King Arthur queer him, but yet again they do so by reimagining the contours of medieval literature, rather than rejecting them entirely.¹⁹ More critically, however, the question remains: who killed the Historian, and why? These unanswered questions hang provocatively after the film's conclusion, alerting viewers to the dangers of thinking one can control the past.

Throughout *Monty Python and the Holy Grail* the Pythons both query and reinstate the perpetual image of the Middle Ages as the Dark Ages, a stereotype that scholarship has challenged and rewritten for decades. It nonetheless continues to be foisted on the public anew, such as in Stephen Greenblatt's multiple award-winning *The Swerve: How the World Became Modern*, one of the latest in a long line of monographs trumpeting the rise of modernism and individuality in the Renaissance after a millennium of medieval darkness.²⁰ A comic film, however, takes a comic perspective on the past, and the Pythons, in large part, acknowledged and questioned longstanding assumptions about the Middle Ages in the film and during its creation, even when they ultimately perpetuated some stereotypes as part

of their comic play. Michael Palin outlines how Jones and Gilliam opted for a visual depiction focusing on the filth of the Middle Ages, despite the fact that Cleese reminded them this perspective was historically myopic: ‘the two Terrys were interested in showing the Middle Ages as a time of complete grot and filth. John was never sure why it was so essential that everybody had to be so dirty; they did have water back then’.²¹ Even such a simple issue as dirt – the sine qua non of much ‘medieval’ film-making – requires exploration and explanation for how it contributes to our always imperfect understanding of history. David Day concludes in his reading of the film: ‘Ultimately at issue in *Monty Python and the Holy Grail* is our ability to know the Middle Ages at all, when every attempt we make ultimately betrays the traces of its modern manufacture.’²² Such modern manufacture, as this chapter demonstrates, also disrupts the assumed meanings of gender and sexuality which can result in queerness, and sometimes such queerness surfaces simply through the viscosity of dirt and excrement that attempts to flatten out the vibrancy of history into a simple ‘truth’. Dirt tells us the Middle Ages were filthy, but the truth of the matter is that dirt tells us what we want to see in the past, and so it reveals the past is always a re-creation.

In sum, the queerness of medievalism arises in the disruptions to gender and sexuality that accrue when one travels imaginatively back to the Middle Ages. The past cannot be constrained by modern master narratives, as the Pythons repeatedly show in their parodic accounts of medieval men questing for glory yet finding only humiliation. Consequently, attempts to view the Middle Ages as hermetically sealed from the present inevitably unleash disruptions to one’s sense of self, often as queerly modulated through genders and sexualities that strip such conceits of their signifying power.

NOTES

1. Carolyn Dinshaw, *How Soon Is Now? Medieval Texts, Amateur Readers, and the Queerness of Time* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012), p. 4
2. Lynn Ramey and I discuss the paradox of the term ‘medieval’ film in *Race, Class, and Gender in ‘Medieval’ Cinema* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), pp. 1–2. See also Bettina Bildhauer’s chapter in this book, particularly her insightful observations in the section entitled ‘What is a medieval film?’
3. Marcia Landy, *Monty Python’s Flying Circus* (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 2005), p. 73. Quotations from *Monty Python’s Flying Circus* are taken from Graham Chapman, John Cleese, Terry Gilliam, Eric Idle, Terry Jones, and Michael Palin, *The Complete Monty Python’s Flying Circus: All the Words*, 2 vols. (New York: Pantheon, 1989), at 1.287–1.288, 1.179, and 1.115.
4. Graham Chapman, John Cleese, Terry Gilliam, Eric Idle, Terry Jones, and Michael Palin, with Bob McCabe, *The Pythons Autobiography* (New York: Thomas Dunne, 2003), p. 232.

5. Page citations of the film are taken from John Cleese, Graham Chapman, Terry Gilliam, Eric Idle, Terry Jones, and Michael Palin, *Monty Python and the Holy Grail: The Screenplay* (1977; York: Methuen, 2012). See also *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*, dir. Terry Jones and Terry Gilliam (1975; Culver City, CA: Columbia TriStar, 2001), DVD.
6. Donald Hoffman, 'Not Dead Yet: *Monty Python and the Holy Grail* in the Twenty-First Century', *Cinema Arthuriana: Twenty Essays*, rev. edn., ed. Kevin Harty (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2002), pp. 136–148, at 144.
7. Wlad Godzich, 'The Holy Grail: The End of the Quest', *North Dakota Quarterly* 51 (1983): 74–81, at 77.
8. Kevin Harty, 'The Damsel "in dis Dress": Gender Bending in the Arthuriad', *Arthuriana* 14.1 (2004): 279–282, at 81.
9. Graham Chapman, Terry Jones, Terry Gilliam, Michael Palin, Eric Idle, and John Cleese, *Monty Python's Second Film: A First Draft* (London: Methuen, 1999), pp. 68–69; italics in original.
10. Graham Chapman, with David Sherlock, Alex Martin, David Yallop, and Douglas Adams, *A Liar's Autobiography: Volume VII* (1980; London: Methuen, 1999), pp. 41, 93, 96.
11. Graham Chapman, *A Liar's Autobiography*, p. 139.
12. Michael Palin, *Diaries 1969–1979: The Python Years* (New York: Thomas Dunne Books, 2006), p. 30.
13. Graham Chapman, *et al.*, *The Pythons Autobiography*, p. 236.
14. Graham Chapman, *et al.*, *The Pythons Autobiography*, p. 239.
15. Lucy Fischer and Marcia Landy, 'General Introduction: Back Story', *Stars: The Film Reader*, eds. Lucy Fischer and Marcia Landy (New York: Routledge, 2004), pp. 1–9, at 4.
16. Michael Palin, *Diaries 1969–1979*, p. 171.
17. The screenplay records the final line of this passage as 'No sooner', but the Historian says instead, 'Now, this is what they did'. Also, the screenplay does not record the production assistant calling 'Pictures for Schools, take eight'.
18. Brian Levy and Lesley Coote, 'The Subversion of Medievalism in *Lancelot du Lac* and *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*', *Postmodern Medievalisms*, eds. Richard Utz and Jesse Swan (Rochester, NY: Boydell & Brewer, 2004), pp. 99–126, at 114.
19. For an overview of literary allusions in *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*, see Tison Pugh and Angela Jane Weisl, *Medievalisms: Making the Past in the Present* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013), pp. 91–92, in which we connect the film to such medieval masterpieces as *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, Gottfried von Strassburg's *Tristan*, Chrétien de Troyes' *Lancelot*, and Sir Thomas Malory's *Morte D'Arthur*.
20. For a series of essays criticising Greenblatt's simplistic depiction of the Middle Ages in his glorification of the Renaissance, see 'Book Review Forum: Stephen Greenblatt's *The Swerve: How the World Became Modern*', *Exemplaria* 25.4 (2013): 313–370.
21. Lenny Rubenstein, 'Monty Python Strikes Again: An Interview with Michael Palin', *Cineaste* 14.2 (1985): 6–9, at 8.
22. David Day, 'Monty Python and the Medieval Other', *Cinema Arthuriana: Essays on Arthurian Film*, ed. Kevin Harty (New York: Garland, 1991), pp. 83–92, at 83.

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